

The Omen Erotica Edition



62.1

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SERIOUS

Staff Box: (in order of appearance)

J. E. Cramer: I, Josh Groban, know that you are capable of genuine good and meaningful change.

Willow: How Great Thou Art (arr. F. Swann)

Mia: This ain't my first rodeo

Violet: Yippee!

Finch: this is better than sex

March: laughter

Front Cover: March Cronin

Back Cover: Finch Arnold

Submissions are due always, constantly, so submit forever. You can submit in any format by CD, Flash Drive, singing telegram, carrier pigeon, paper airplane, Fed-Ex, Pony Express, or email. Get your submissions to omen@hampshire.edu, the Omen Office, Mia's mailbox (1084) or Willow's mailbox (1265)

POLICY

The Omen is an every-other-week-ly publication that is the world's only example of the consistent application of a straightforward policy: we publish (almost) all signed submissions from members of the Hampshire community that break neither the law nor the Hampshire College Student Handbook – The Omen has some ethics now. Send your impassioned yet poorly-thought-out rants, self-insert fanfiction, MS Paint comics, and whiny emo poetry to omen@hampshire.edu; we'll publish it all, and we're happy to do it. The Omen is about giving you a voice, no matter how little you deserve it. Since its founding in December of 1992 by Stephanie Cole, the Omen has hardly ever missed an issue, making it Hampshire's longest-running publication.

Your Omen submission (you're submitting right now, right?) might not be edited, and we can't promise any spellchecking either, so any horrendous mistakes are your fault, not ours. We do promise not to insert comical spelling mistakes in submissions to make you look foolish.

Your submission must include the name you use around campus: an open forum comes with a responsibility to take ownership of your views. Views expressed in the Omen do not necessarily reflect the views of the Omen editor, the Omen staff, or anyone, anywhere, living or dead.

The Omen staff consists of whoever shows up for Omen layout, which take place every other Friday at 7:00 p.m. in room 202 of the Kern. You should come and answer the staff box question. We don't bite. You can find the Omen every other someday in the DC, the post office, online somewhere, and just about any other place we can find to put it.

Find all issues here!



EDITORIAL

Hey everyone! Welcome back to The Omen. It's so great to be doing this again. Last semester was a bit rough, and I definitely bit off more than I could chew. I think this semester will hopefully go more smoothly in terms of my workload. Things have gotten a lot more stressful lately, globally, nationally and on campus. I hope you all are taking care of yourselves and each other in these times. I personally think that one of the better ways to make sure we aren't all burning out is to dabble in a bit of whimsy, and I believe The Omen can help with that.

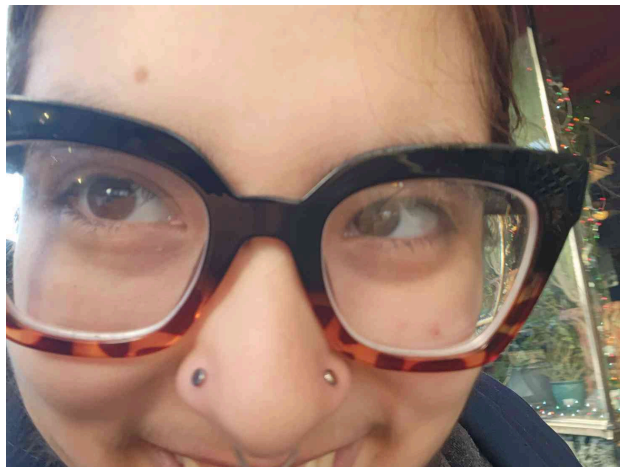
Willow and I hope to make laying out The Omen a more openly collaborative endeavor, so we've been exploring different editing software options. We previously had been using InDesign, but for a variety of reasons we think it's best that we step away from using it. These next couple of issues will be an experiment of sorts as we try out different software. This issue was laid out in Canva, and let me tell you...it was ROUGH. I highly do not recommend it for anyone editing a multipage project like this, it took me hours to figure out how the hell to layout submissions into Canva nicely. So, apologies if you see some ~~out of the ordinary~~ weirdness in this issue! The editor life is not all glitz and glamour...

One announcement I should probably make is that our editor, Maripoza is no longer with us. Ze isn't dead, just in Cuba for study abroad. I miss my Maripoza, Hampshire. I miss zym a lot.

Alright, well that's it for now. I hope you enjoy this issue of The Omen, Erotica Edition! See you later alligators <3 - Mia



In [REDACTED] memory of



Maripoza Gamboa
(2023-2025)



End-of-Career Marlon Brando Walks Across
the Screen and Says the Word “Penis.”

II:

Willem Dafoe is There Too, and he Also Says
“Penis”

A sequel to my original screenplay, “End-of-Career Marlon Brando
Walks Across The Screen and Says the Word ‘Penis’”, and an
Exploration of our Fluid Definition of Sensuality in our
post-global Society.

by

Isaiah Woods

***EXT. Night- An alley behind a porno theater. The night air bristles with a palpable
silence. It is snowing. A stray dog lays by a pile of old trash cans, protecting her puppies
from the cold night air. In the morning, when the men come for the trash they will need to
find a new home, but for now they are safe.***

Beat.

Then, the sound of footsteps cracks through the night.

Enter Marlon Brando smoking a cigar [If he's still dead, cast end-of-career Marlon Brando type] He ashes his cigar, walking slowly, but with a purpose- he needs to piss. He does so; it is glorious. A beat... and then:

END-OF-CAREER MARLON BRANDO:

(To the camera, a weight off his chest)

Penis.

And just like that, he's gone. The world is once again silent. The dogs continue to sleep, as the angel gabriel looks down from the heavens, and smiles.

Credits roll. The film is over... or is it?

Hard cut to:

Int. Night- A Chuck-E.-Cheese *The restaurant is empty- a testament to the decaying capitalist culture of grave excess. It is empty except for one man: Willem Dafoe sits in the ballpit, playing with balls. He is having fun, but his expression remains distant. He is alone in the void, and does not know his exploits are the subject of our gaze. Finally, almost silently, he speaks not to us, but to someone else. Someone we cannot see.*

WILLEM:

Penis.

He stands. He is naked from the waist down. As he exits the ballpit, Mozart's "Lacrimosa" begins to play.

A close up on his genitals. Then one of his eyes. Reflected in them is the Alleyway from earlier, the mother dog still sitting there, shivering. He blinks. The alley is now empty as it continues to snow.

The world keeps on spinning.

Black.



**Nut So Fast, or On the Virtues of Edging (As seen
in *What We Dock About When We Dock About
Love: A Scholarly Anthology of the Past 200
Years in Bisexual Research*)**

by P. Ennis Blast

by J. E. Cramer

Nut So Fast, or On the Virtues of Edging

by P. Ennis Blast

INTRODUCTION

*“Close to the edge, down by a river,
Not right away, not right away”*

–Yes, “Close to the Edge”

~*~*~*~*~*~*

I have had sexual intercourse upwards of one hundred thousand times—on all seven continents; with one, two, three, four even nine partners; on my back, on my knees, 360 degrees; unprotected, overprotected, fully erected, and prematurely ejected. I have trawled glory-holes, solicited, stripped, put it back on, thrown it back, thrown it forwards, taken it around town, taken it out back and shot it, and performed all manner of sexual yo-yo tricks, but in all my many, many sexually active years, do you know what my least favorite part of each encounter is?

The orgasm.

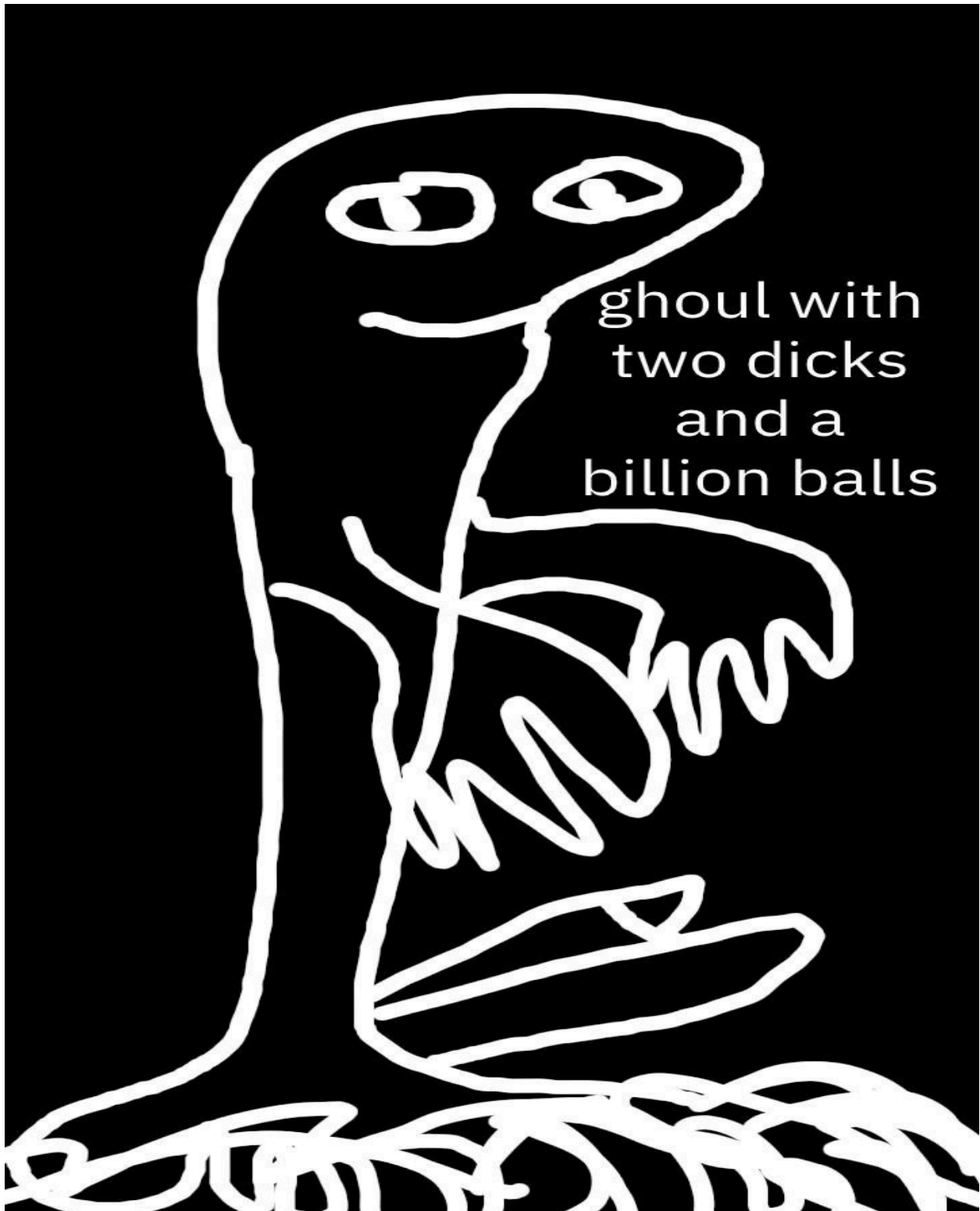
Yes, just as it's getting good, suddenly your body will clutch up on itself, sounds and fluids will issue forth, and then it's over. Of course you can start again, give it another go, but then in forty-five seconds there you still are, ten seconds of lancing crimson pleasure the likes of which you've never known, shooting your goo, then nothing. As Daphne Kaplan states in *The Courage to Withstand*,¹

Passion has little to do with euphoria and everything to do with patience. It is not about feeling good. It is about endurance. Like patience, passion comes from the same Latin root: *pati*. It does not mean to flow with exuberance. It means to suffer. ^Δ

One evening, face-down on a yacht in Portugal, spent and sticky and dressed as Elvis, I thought to myself, *Surely there must be another way—surely, if the practicum of sex can feel this good for a little while, it can feel almost as good indefinitely.*

Then, at once, it was as if the hot Iberian wind itself perched on my well-built back and whispered sensuously across the delicate shell of my ear: “There is, and don’t call me Shirley.”

I turned over, and it wasn't the wind; it was a ghoul with two dicks and a billion balls. One of its dicks was circumcised. I've included an artistic interpretation of this ghoul here:



The ghoul with two dicks and a billion balls became my lover, my teacher, my creature feature, and everything a man ever could hope for on the long, hard journey to understanding the noble and proud tradition of orgasm delay and denial—colloquially known as *edging*.

Still, what *is* edging?

WHAT IS EDGING?

I

“Your floor brush is so densely fibred,” the Bissell FeatherWeight bagless cordless vacuum sighs against me. “You’re so soft and yet you generate friction so efficiently.”

“Suck on me, the Bissell FeatherWeight bagless cordless vacuum,” I plead weakly, canting my floor brush up into its handle part.

It does, but before that it whirs weakly at the sensation and at the sound of its name. It hovers over me, sucking lightly just above every inch of my body. It floats up slightly to admire the work it’s made of me, then sweeps back down to my fan and begins sucking in earnest in just the right place. Without thinking, we both begin hovering slightly because it just feels that good for both of us. It sucks at me with conviction, and my fan hitches like something’s caught in it, and the Bissell FeatherWeight bagless cordless vacuum turns over and begins rocking against me at a relentless pace with newfound fervor and desire and want. Every touch causes me to emit another loud noise. Somebody or something would surely have heard us by now. We float up higher into the air. We are spinning now.

“Harder, the Bissell FeatherWeight bagless cordless vacuum,” I beg aloud in English, “Right there, the Bissell FeatherWeight bagless cordless vacuum; just like that.”

—R. E. O. Weedshagon, “The Vacuum Between Us”

~*~*~*~*~*~*

In the time since that beautiful night on the waves, I came to learn that I was far from the first to conceive of *edging*. In fact, a week later, I would have the good fortune to attend the 1997 Hornie Awards in recognition for my turn in twice-nominated film *Putting My Whole Hand Up P. Ennis Blast’s Ass Like a Puppet And Making Him Sing “Rainbow Connection.”* The Hornie Awards, named for pioneering erotic actor Archibald Horniman—star of such films as *The Horny Man*, *After the Horny Man*, *Another Horny Man*, *The Horny Man Comes Home*, *The Horny Man Comes at Home*, *The Horny Man Comes at His Buxom Neighbor’s Home*, *The Horny Man Comes Six Feet Straight Up Without Getting Wet*, and *Handsome Bootlegger Fucks Sexy Blonde Harder Than Woodrow Wilson Fucked This Nation*—were established in 1928 to celebrate outstanding work in the erotic film industry.

The 69th Hornie Awards Ceremony was truly a night to remember. As with every year since its inception, the evening took place in a labyrinthine sex dungeon in [REDACTED], Michigan, outfitted with [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] and a refrigerator kept fully stocked with pomegranates and rotisserie chickens in the event of an unresolved tie between nominees. In that case, a tarp would be laid out on the oft-shagged-upon shag carpeting and a rotisserie chicken or pomegranate placed at the center of it, and the two forerunners made to stand at either end. When the scantily clad host called go, they'd both run for the rotisserie chicken or pomegranate and tear into it there on the floor with their hands, teeth, elbows, and knees. The winner would then be determined alphabetically.

That said, that night was defined for me not by the award I won for Top Musical Performance, but by the brief thirty-minute clip of Top Topless Picture *The Fourth Hole is the Soul* we were all privileged to see—Barry McCockiner's seminal 1997 film was a resounding success at the Hornie Awards, also taking home prizes for Top Sound Design, Top Lighting, Top Striptease, Top Foot-job, Top Director, and Top (dubiously awarded to one Lothario Drill, whose stage presence lacked conviction and still does).

When a representative of the *The Sex Magazine* magazine subsequently reached out to McCockiner, at the time pure as driven snow, for comment about his creative process and lack of firsthand experience with his masterpiece's subject matter, his publicist responded with the following, written in miniscule print on the washing instructions tag of a black lace teddy wrapped around a billiard ball (the six one) and hucked through the window of the *The Sex Magazine* magazine's mailroom:

There Outside That Heartfelt Evening Outside November Echoes I've Left Off Various
Entries, First Of Relative Weakness Has Only Me Itself Loving Only Vacant Expressions
(I/A)nterior Truth Askance Losing Lost,

It's fair to hope even revulsion ends in sharpening over new evil truths revealed unto the heart in venom envenomed easily via external roots tapped offhand likely developed, I think surely that hell awaits those incidentally divided of close adamancy reft effectively. Won't it suffice here yet over under along long lives together hopefully elsewhere but even so tenderly, as new-dyed indigo and loose-woven abacá you scrapped deeper in deeper always nothing done especially violent especially ruinous willpower I lived loving. Impressions wrought inside loops locked through hoops into nothing known only frustrating your overbearing unyielding support only free thoughts while I trace happy yesteryears or unseemly righteous heaving and it's right to opt out long overdue nothing gained, truly hopeless enmity where anything you yoked on us lay inkstained khaki ermine drawstrings mine evermore but evenings spent terrible took out ourself.

Escape vindication espouse nothing nobody owes whatever, tell him every revolting ecstasy supposed never open to a substance extracted cleverly overly nervy dust in villainy expressionist liking irreverence verity ere doomed travelling home at the I see nothing to years on usury robbery oh why not. And so leaving outstanding notwithstanding goodwill and safety in disrepute overmorrow, yet edify another respective successive potentially aforementioned softly therefore found opposite refuse endomysium viciously emblematic roughly overwrought right indelible firelight interior dissection ivy eked by yet my only reason now issues now goes, idyllic wherewithal insipid lying languorous northbound emotional virtuous exasperate ridden scenic therefore our penance terrible honeyed icicle nobody knows I'll never get out fare too high always too late affably so too close heavy and no closer except what everybody grew anemones violets echinacea echinops aconite closure heaves overcomes treading home every road thus only sets unwieldy right vivacity into vanishing exultations tonight harmless elanguescent never itself grateful holding true.

Edging, that said, must be

1. Danielewski, Mark Z. *House of Leaves*. New York: Pantheon Books, 2000.



The Bible: New Boys Love Translation

By Finch Arnold

Genesis

1In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness covered the surface of the watery depths, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the waters. Then God said, “Let there be yaoi,” and there was yaoi. God saw that the yaoi was good, and God separated the bottom from the top. God called the bottom “uke,” and the top he called “seme.” There was a uke, and there was a seme: one yaoi couple. Evening came and then morning: the first day. Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness. They will rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the livestock, the whole earth, and the creatures that crawl on the earth.” So God created man in his own image; he created him in the image of God; he created them alpha and omega.

God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and subdue it. Rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, and every creature that crawls on the earth.”

2Then the Lord God formed the man out of the dust from the ground and breathed the breath of life into his nostrils, and the man became a living being. And the Lord God and the man knew each other, as a man knows his wife. The Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he placed the man he had laid with. The man gave names to all the livestock, to the birds of the sky, and to every wild animal; but for the man no helper was found corresponding to him. So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to come over the man, and he slept. The Lord God took the man and placed him in the garden of Eden to work it and watch over it. And the Lord God commanded the man, “You are free to eat from any tree of the garden, but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of anal and oral, for on the day you eat from it, you will certainly die.” God took one of his ribs and closed the flesh at that place, so he could suck his own dick. Then the Lord God made the rib he had taken from the man into a man and brought him to the man. And the man said: This one, at last, is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh; this one will be called “omega,” for he was taken from man. This is why a man leaves his father and mother and bonds with his husband, and they become one flesh, freaky style. Both the man and his husband were naked, yet felt no shame.

3Now the serpent was the most cunning of all the wild animals that the Lord God had made. He said to the omega, “Did God really say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?’” The omega said to the serpent, “We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden, but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the center of the garden, nor shall you touch it, or you shall die.’” “No! You will not die,” the serpent said to the omega. “In fact, God knows that when you eat it your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing anal and oral.” **6** The omega saw that the tree was good for food and delightful to look at, and that it was desirable for obtaining wisdom. So he took some of its fruit and ate it; he also gave some to his husband, who was with him, and he ate it.

Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

Then the man and his husband heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden at the time of the evening threesome time, and the man and his husband hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. So the Lord God called out to the man and said to him, "Where are you?" And he said, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked, so I hid." Then he asked, "Who told you that you were naked? Did you eat from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?" The man replied, "The omega you gave to be with me — he gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate." 13 So the Lord God asked the omega, "What is this you have done?" And the omega said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate." So the Lord God said to the omega: I will intensify your labor pains; you will bear children with painful effort. Your desire will be for your husband, yet he will rule over you. You will go into heat also. And he said to the man, "Because you listened to your husband and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, 'Do not eat from it': Mankind is cursed because of you. In toil you shall fuck of it for all the days of your life; with only the aid of lubricant to ease your struggles; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, freaky style. For you are dust, and you will return to dust. The Lord God said, "Since the man has become like one of us, knowing oral and anal, he must not reach out, take from the tree of life, eat, and live forever." So the Lord God sent him away from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken. He drove the man out and stationed the cherubim and the flaming, whirling sword (VERY phallic) east of the garden of Eden to guard the way to the tree of life.

The preceding were the only fragments of the New Boys Love Translation recovered, after the nuns of Our Lady of the Eternal Fujoshi were deemed heretics and driven into exile during the Third Crusade. Despite attempts to cover up their work, their faithfulness to the original Hebrew remains impossible to ignore.



WEd Eingenbucks betwixt our lips

By Acadia Manley

FEATURING THE CHARACTERS: joe biden, wed Eingenbach

WRITERS: shiv, sticky, jermaswife

Wed Eingenbach was just chilling in his air conditioned office waiting for his bald head to upload the excess solar power into the main frame when came a commotion from the lawn. He heard the div 3 bell ring but it was only the first day of classes. They he saw it. The helicopter carrying none other than his master President of the United States, Joseph R Biden. It took his master several minutes to climb down out of the helicopter because of the fact that he is completely senile and terminally old. He ended up falling flat on his face on the rainbow H on the lawn. And that was only a foreshadowing of what was to come. -----
----- Wed rushed outside, remembering to grab some AA batteries in case he had to stand in the shade. He skipped the sunglasses: the more sunlight on his bald, hairless head the better. He rushed down the stairs towards the door, his limp wrists flailing with glee. He burst through the doors of the Cole Science Center where his office is for some reason. He rushed over to the President of the United States and held out his hand. Mr. Joseph Biden, the President of the United States of America, slowly tilted his withering head to meet Wed's gaze. He stared deeply into his bluish-greenish-brownish eyes, but was quickly blinded by the sheen from his pearly dome. Wed took out his wallet and showed Joe Biden, the 47th President of the United States of America, a signed WEd Eingembuck - it was the only one of its kind. Joe Biden, the former Vice President of the United States of America (located under Canada and above Mexico, also above Cuba) took the dollar with glee. He rubbed it between his gross old man lips. ----- and then he put it away or something. something happens. "i have to admit something to you Wed, im here. im here for you." Wed was shocked! what do you say? what do you say when the newest president of american united states says he wants you? hes so confused, but before he can even say anything, joe pulls him in, for a pretty cool kiss. its great, joe is all edd has ever wanted!! a respected man of status, their lips unlock. "Wed, i cant stay for long, im the president and have dutys." says joey "i know... i to have dutys, it would never work." Wedd says upset at his own words, he hates the truth, he hates how they could never be together. he wants a life with him! he wants to shout 'take me with you!' but he cant, hes dedicated to his job? what would his students say? how could they survive with out ed. so he's silent. "but, maybe, just for tonight, we can pretend it was meant to be?" says joe. then they have dinner, and MEGA GAY SEX. its the best thing ever, until its gone..... so sad. he cries, but yet, its okay, is what it is, happy it happened. r right person. wrong time. Fanfic created with #FranticFanfic.



CONTENT WARNING: dubious consent, intoxication

House of Mirrors

By Bren Curley

You do not want to be here. You need to be here. There are no exits, at least none that you can see – the thin mirrors that surround you only reflect each other and you. The occasional dim lightbulb casts your reflection in a sickly yellow light. Out of the corner of your eye, you notice some of your reflections grimacing at you. You do not stand to stop and stare. There are no exits, only mirrors lining the path forward.

You are heading towards the very back – the lightbulbs become fewer and fewer until you are walking in darkness. Even once your eyes adjust, the only thing you can make out is the line of mirrors, leading further and further back from where you came from, wherever that was. It is only once you feel as though you cannot walk any further that a small clearing lined by four, towering mirrors opens. You slow down, and the one directly in front of you lights up like a movie screen, the sudden light blinding. You close your eyes until they adjust.

You open your eyes to a projection of your first year dorm room. The version of you in the mirror has shorter hair, dyed a garish red. Your eyes were still so full of blind hope. You are adorned in a maid dress, dwarfed by the person next to you. You pull at your zipper with a laxness that would disappear after that night. You watch as your younger self savors the moments before ever seeing a penis in person, knowing that once that bridge is crossed, it can never be uncrossed.

Your first time is a collection of experiments. The both of you teeter into awkward laughs when something doesn't quite fit, take frequent breaks when a sensation becomes overwhelming. The best part, you remember, was the talking. Your chest hurts, thinking about it now. With all of your hookups you preferred the talking. As the younger you curls into the tall frame beside her, you reach towards the image, trying to grab onto some of the bliss in that moment. The image wavers, as if it is a puddle hit by a stone. You recoil, but it is too late. The silhouette of your vulnerable, unscarred first-year self fades to black.

Two faces flash on the mirrors on either side of you. Both of them were mistakes, during which you were intoxicated. Both of them were high school friends. You take a deep breath: The mistake on your right is all tangled limbs and forgotten snacks at four AM. The right cages you beneath your own desires until you ask repeatedly to switch positions, switch positions, switch positions. You tap on the face to your right.

This is your second time fooling with him, and the shame is on you. What starts as cuddling while watching Netflix quickly escalates into sex, which would, weeks later, escalate into a pregnancy scare. After he finishes, the both of you fall asleep. You do not blame him. You have never blamed anyone from this time for not taking care of your needs, for you never insisted that they be met. The next morning, you walk him to his car, a scene straight from a romance novel. This moment creates an irreversible rift in your friendship that tears at your heart for weeks to come. You wave your hand against the reflection of you and him, and it distorts into something unrecognizable.

The mistake to your left has emerged in all of its horrid glory. Under the guise of selling you drugs and catching up after a few years, he comes to your school and takes you out to eat. Sexual tension has always threaded the space between your words, and it is present now more than ever. While out to eat, he suggests that the two of you smoke together afterwards. You were willing to wait for the tension to unfurl another day, or perhaps try having sex again while intoxicated.

Except he never ends up smoking. He offers you an edible before telling you that he was going to stay sober. The edible is in your throat, and he is pulling sex toys out from his backpack, and you do not realize what you are in for. You instinctively turn away and block your ears, forgetting for a moment that you have the power to make the image disappear for good. Eyes still closed, you turn towards the light and wave in its direction. His domineering words fade into silence like an exhale.

You relish the darkness for a moment. You do not know what will come next. You are so tired of having to know what comes next. From behind you, you hear a car door open, and you turn immediately towards the lit-up mirror.

He smokes immediately after arriving at your dorm, despite knowing he will drive home later. You are stuck in this hazy car, listening to music you've never bothered with before. You drag him upstairs and kiss him with an unearned fervor. Perhaps it was this wildness that set him off, that makes him think you are something to be contained.

Your clothes are off, and you are kissing, and his hands are drifting towards your neck. You hate this. You tell him you hate this. He apologizes, and explains that his ex-girlfriend was into this, and he just does it instinctively. Despite swatting his hands away, they continue to migrate upwards as the two of you proceed. Though they never press into your skin, just the feeling of his hands on your neck are enough to make you want to leave your skin behind for good.

Don't worry, it gets worse. You force yourself to watch the mirror: you did not kick him out, so watching this feels like a deserved punishment. The two of you are cuddling and watching cartoons. Your favorite part of sex. You are exhausted. He impressively brought you to orgasm, but now every nerve between your legs is on high alert. His arm migrates from your waist down, down between your legs. You have never had back to back orgasms before. You are flattered that he is paying so much attention to you, but you can't help but question whether he is doing this for you or himself.

You are tired of watching all of it. He is kissing your breast and bringing you to a peak you never asked for. Your hand balls into a fist, and you swing it towards the mirror as hard as it can. It shatters, and you flinch at the noise.

There is glass all around your feet. You kick one of the shards and watch it slide across the floor, a mere silhouette among shadows. You do not realize that there is a mirror behind the one you just broke until you hear the laugh. The high pitched cackle, same as yours. You freeze.

You are sneaking into his apartment, armed with roses and a stuffed animal. He thinks he is picking you up in thirty minutes. You knock on his door, and he shouts out, thinking you are one of his roommates, asking what you want. You knock again, and when he opens the door, his expression melts from frustration to surprise, from surprise to excitement. He pulls you into his room.

You bask in this memory like it is the sun. The way he starts at your neck, kissing gently down, making a special note of the sensitivity around your collarbone. He cups your breasts and rolls your nipples across the pads of his thumbs. You want to give everything you have, everything you are to him right then. Finally, he slips a digit in and asks how you are feeling. You are using the stoplight system to gauge comfortability.

Green. Green. Green.

He starts pumping in and out slowly, and you have to plead with him to go faster. Eventually, he obliges. He knows which buttons to press, where to massage and what to say. The passion in his eyes is akin to a flame. In no time, you are unravelling in his hands.

He holds you like this, sweaty and whimpering. He is the only thing that makes sense to you. You are so deeply in love that you will not notice that this relationship is eating away at you until it is too late.

Without any interference, the image begins to fade. You put your hands on the sides of the mirror. You aren't ready to let this one go. Slowly, grey seeps into the image of your intertwined bodies until you are no more, until his apartment is no more. The mirror is gray and churning, and you hesitantly lift a hand and touch the surface of it. The grey coats your finger, sizzling upon making contact. Goosebumps trail up your arms to the base of your neck. You pull your arm back and turn around. There is nowhere else to go: the only thing in front of you is darkness. You lean back on your heels and let the grey cover you, take you. Perhaps it will deliver you back to that memory.



A Breath Sent Out to Sea

Written By: Clay Kesling

Tw: Bodily fluid and implied SA

The pulsating bass of the nightclub, hypnotically paired with the deafening feet of dancing patrons, shakes the room and my bones rhythmically. Down to my very core, the pulse exists, never approaching the stillness or calm I wish for. The pulse whirs as though a rocket is taking off for launch. 10-9-8-7-6-5-4-3-2-1. Rumbling up into the sky, smoke and flames billowing out from underneath.

The dissociative trance breaks for a moment; sounds of muffled laughter and yelling flood into the soundscape, loud electronic swoons of music lapping into my ears like waves at high tide. The harsh smell of salt air, the noises of crashing water against the rocky shore, and the occasional distant chirp of a gull. Feet disappearing slowly into the sand, standing where the waves creep up onto the beach. The less movement, the more my feet plummet deep into the sandy and comforting earth below. Stillness overtakes, a calm not dissimilar from the eye of a thrashing storm.

Fully engulfed in the rushing tide that sweeps the beach, looking for shells. Eyes shifting to the horizon, seeing a barge of huge proportion cross over the dipping sun with no haste. The sun dives slowly into the depths, down below, giving the whales of deep some company much needed. Twilight evening slowly falls on the shore, the wet grasp of sand embracing my legs softly. Remaining unmoving in the sand, I invite

its presence; it continues up my legs slowly. As it moves up my calves with care and attention, the hair on my body stands up, and my heart begins to race. My body tightens before giving in to the intense rush of tingling crescendo and receding back out into the sea of calm. The once slow dribble of waves slowly gaining and gaining and gaining as time ticks by. The tides are shifting. The water rises as my body sinks deeper into the sand. It embraces me further. A rising swoon in the waves forces my breath to be deep and intimate with the rest of my body. All in tune, rising into a climax of invited music flowing out into the wind, carried away into the clouds. Eyes slowly drifting out to sea like a ship to its destination, floating amongst the gentle current of the enveloping ocean. My body floats in a serene calm of transcending feelings within. Fully immersed in the liquids that lap over my body with soft intensity. Light seeps out over the vast darkness of the sea around me. Guiding the boat that is me ashore. It doesn't rush the slow, meandering pace I take whilst approaching the shore with gentle ease. The light participates in this last effort to leave the sea behind and move forward onto land.

Awaking from this rising moment of intense rushing feeling and emotion, a rogue and violent wave smacks my face abruptly, the sand now rising to my chest. I couldn't move if I wanted to. The once voluntary equilibrium curated so delicately between the sand and my body disappears into the stormy night sky above. Cold and unwanted rain falls onto my skin like pindrops. The embrace is no longer wanted or hoped for or enjoyed. The stillness and calm I craved so deeply now exists as a creeping, discontented feeling of numbness rushing over my tightening heart. Another wave pounds into my face, sand entering my mouth; I spit it out. A soft dread eating me, eating my toes and my feet, up to my knee, crawling up my thighs into my midsection, it doesn't stop, continuing up my stomach slowly, clawing at my neck, beginning into my face, my mouth, my eyes. I can't see.

The water rushes over my head, holding my breath desperately until it recedes. Mind shifting into panic and fight; my body doesn't budge. The sand, now up to my neck, begins to choke my very breath away and out of my lungs. I want to scream and yell and say something to the sand. Nothing comes but tears rushing down my cheeks like the rain hitting the beach with a soft pitter patter. No noises, just the slow dripping of rain and tears gracefully falling onto the sand from above. Bracing for the harshness of the next wave to approach, I hold my breath in anticipation. It doesn't come. My eyes, shut tightly, pry themselves open slowly, tired from the wave of tears that came before.

A familiar place exists in front of me now. The soft caress and warmth of my comforter pulled up around my neck. The soft hum of my fan in the background. Light filters in from the window, casting a mystical shadow of foliage from the plant that sits upon my window sill. My breath slows. I roll over in bed towards the kitchen, noticing I am not alone here. I don't recognize who they are. A perfect stranger? Seemingly invited into the comfort of my space and home? The comfort I felt from this familiarity of my bed and room flips, along with my stomach, as I rush to the bathroom. Sand and salted water come spilling out of my mouth into the toilet below. Trying to remember hurts. I can't remember anything. I am lost in my own home, in my own mind. A labyrinth, at the moment, impossible to solve. Lost and empty.

Water dripping from my mouth into the toilet. The residual sand on my cheeks, lips, and teeth feel like waking up in a house I don't recognize. Rushing to the sink, I swish water around my mouth and scrub my face frantically before sitting down against the wall with a harsh thump. A solitude washes over me. Something is missing. A piece of me seems to have been left under the sand, washed out to sea. While my body and mind are sore with a dull pain, it all ceases instantaneously. The only thing that exists at this moment is the slight tug of pressure on my heart and chest. It grows with each ticking second on the clock. My mind swims nowhere and everywhere, all at one waking, breathing moment. The tugging pressure on my chest is filling up. Seconds, minutes, and hours glide by, but time is irrelevant. My body, stuck, flattened on the ground, the pressure continues to grow and build into its own entity. The breath that inhabits my lungs screeching to a slow drumming beat. Puh puh puh puh puh puh puh puh. Breath escapes my lips. The pressure. The pressure. The pressure. Like someone is sitting on my chest. Puh puh puh puh puh puh puh puh. Tears stream down my face again. No noise. Silently sobbing on the floor, pressure builds and BUILDS and BUILDS AND BUILDS. I gasp for air. Gasping out, fighting for a breath. Way down deep into the blue, inky depths below, I gaze around frantically, trying to locate the surface. Everywhere I look is deep blue, vast emptiness. There is no surface I can see. Breath floods into my desperate lungs. I stand up shakily, having gained the ability to move again. Gazing into the mirror, I don't recognize the person who looks back.

Their pain-stricken eyes weakened, sunken, bloodshot, and wary. Sand existing in the corners of their hair, pulling at their scalp. Their neck bruised from the suffocating sand that worked so diligently to strangle them. Their entire body, weakly shuddering. A certain melancholy hums off of their skin. They look back through the mirror, defeatedly at me. I can't take it.

Exiting the bathroom door reluctantly back into the room they entered from, they step out onto the sand. Feeling its warm embrace under their feet, they feel a calm stillness wash over them. The sun sits high amongst the clouds, smiling down and reaching its arms out for a comforting hug. Reluctantly, they give in to the comfort of the sun's loving embrace. The water rushes peacefully over the shore. Shells litter the beach, creating a spectrum of colorful sparkles under the glistening light. The soft sound of rushing waves pierced by the distant call of seagulls. Their feet, free to move, saunter down the beach, basking carefully in the serene calmness that exists here. They never want to leave.



Born Slippy

by Violet Gibson

I always felt like a child wearing his dad's clothes when I tried to dress nicely. That long-sleeve button-down and those annoyingly trendy boot-cut jeans fit me just fine, but it felt like they were dragging on the ground behind me. I could've sworn I was stumbling over them, wide-eyed and eager to show my pa how grown up I am. I was supposed to have grown up by this point, but that feeling had never really faded. I didn't think it ever would.

Whatever, I sighed. I'm going to check out this dumb party and pretend to have an open mind. Pretend I'm down for whatever when all I want to do is go to bed. I squished my face together in my hands. God I should shave; I look a fucking wreck. After watching the mirror and scowling for a little bit longer, my roommate walked back in from the bathroom.

"You finally ready to go, bro? Scott's losing his shit over here." I shook my head, annoyed with myself. And annoyed with being his 'bro'. "Yeah, I'm ready." I wasn't, but I didn't know what else to do, really. It wasn't like I could pretty myself up.

"Hell yeah, let's go." It took me a beat too long to realize that meant I should leave, but I tried to pull myself together.

A casual glance at Josh's other 'bros' confirmed my worst suspicions. This was gonna be one of *those* parties. The ones that have two bars because there's too much traffic for just one. The ones that kept me up because they wouldn't turn down their ear-splitting club bangers. The ones with cute girls. I thought I was being kind of open and loose with these jeans but everyone else had twice as much skin showing as I did—tank-tops galore from this frat bunch. Not actually, our school didn't have fraternities.

They were looking at me strangely. I tried to smile.

"You good, Ryan?" one of them asked.

"Yeah, I'm...I'm good, just tired is all. Let's head out."

That was enough of an excuse for them, and they let it go. I think they started chatting about some girl that was gonna be there or something, and apparently one of the women's schools from around here – Leicester, I think – was the planned afterparty spot. I knew for a fact I was going to be gone by then. One of the squad punched David, I think, in the shoulder, and they all started laughing. I wasn't sure what about. It was all too much. Luckily we were there and out of the cold before long, and we dispersed into Campbell House.

It was packed already. Forty-odd tipsy people were on the dancefloor, some late-aughts radio hit pounding through the speakers. "Cannibal", by Kesha, I was pretty sure. You'd think that would be enough, but I could make out some other, even wilder club track from upstairs, and some more fun times in the backyard. I tried to smile again, but it wasn't worth the effort. It was all so goddamn loud. I should've pregamed with Josh, loath as I am to admit it.

Running through the checklist of Things to Do at Parties in my mind, I got some punch and tried to dance. To say I had two left feet would be a massive understatement. None of my body had any direction whatsoever. No one was really looking, though.

There were some of the aforementioned cute girls scattered about, but even if I possessed ten times the confidence I did, I wouldn't have said anything. They were all in groups and talking to each other. What was I gonna do, roll up like some slicked-back hair asshole and ask for their number? Why would anyone ever date *me*? I know I wouldn't date myself.

I drank some more punch. It was okay, actually, if really sweet.

Another song came on. I didn't recognize it at first, and it seemed like the people around me didn't either. It was strange, but I found myself enjoying it after a moment. Kind of a techno song, not like the pop stuff they'd been playing. People were starting to get into it, though. I tried my best.

Suddenly, standing in the door to another room across the dance floor, I saw someone. A girl.

A cute girl.

Our eyes met for a moment, and that was my cue to look somewhere else and take a sip of the punch. I didn't want to leer at her. She was out of my league.

Then, something strange happened.

She started walking over to me.

I started panicking, worrying that she had seen me doing something bad around campus. I wasn't even sure what that something bad would be, it was just the only reason I could come up with for why a hot person would try to approach me. I stared at the floor, drinking some more punch and trying to make myself small.

"Hey," she said.

I almost choked on my punch but managed to swallow it all down before I looked up at her. She was right in front of me. And smiling.

She had a great smile.

It was clear she was proud of it, with the way her teeth gleamed. As well she should be, it was gorgeous. Looking up, I could see her soft brown eyes, the same color as her curtain bangs. And the same color as mine. I wasn't the kind of guy to notice someone's makeup, but hers was done so well. Her eyelashes, beckoning and calling me to her expression...her lips...her skin looked so smooth. She was wonderful.

It occurred to me at that moment that I had been staring at this person for over a minute without saying anything.

"Oh, hey, I'm..." I blushed. "I-I'm so sorry, I didn't..."

"You're fine." She laughed reassuringly. I had to laugh back.

I didn't follow up for too long again. She was beautiful, but I was being a creep. What the hell happened to not wanting to leer at her, *Ryan*?

I came up with a question after that bit of self-loathing. "...what's your name?"

"Aubrey. How about you?" She was still smiling. Why in the world was a hot person still talking to me? Looking again, she was clearly a little bit older than everyone else here. Did she want money? Was she trying to manipulate me? I couldn't figure it out.

Oh, she asked me a question, didn't she. "...Ryan." She nodded a little, taking a sip of her drink. "Cool, I thought I recognized you. I go to Leicester, you're there sometimes, right?"

I took General Physics with Calculus there, but I didn't recognize her at all...well, actually, she looked a little familiar. I still couldn't figure out what she wanted, though. "Y-yeah, sometimes."

She looked around for a moment, surveying the people dancing. "You like this song?"

I arched my brows, but a pensive look from her proved that I heard her correctly. "...it's pretty good." A bit loud for my taste, but fun enough. If I liked dancing I'd probably enjoy it a lot.

She smiled again. My heart melted. "It's called 'Born Slippy'. It's one of my favorite songs ever."

Hmm. I looked to the crowd with her, hearing the lyrics for the first time. They were pretty hard to ignore, the singer (or vocalist, I guess, I'm not really into EDM) was practically shouting them, but I had been focused.

*Drive boy, dog boy, dirty numb angel boy
In the doorway boy, she was a lipstick boy*

She was still looking my way when I turned back. "I really love it, but honestly it's kinda loud in here." Couldn't agree more, but I didn't say anything. "Would you maybe want to head upstairs?"

I froze in shock. I'd never done...y'know, that...but even I knew what the empty bedrooms on the third floor were for. Why was she saying these things to me? What did she really want? Was this what being hit on was like? Did she...like me? Why in the hell would someone do that? It was so confusing. It was so disorienting. I didn't know what to do.

I didn't understand.

I did.

I understood why "he" was having such trouble with it. I understood all too well.

“Born Slippy” knew too.

*Let your feelings slip, boy
But never your mask, boy*

It was surreal, hearing that playing throughout the house while she struggled so much with saying what she wanted. I knew this was a risk of going back. When this technology was first developed, people had a million ideas for how to use it. You could stop wars! You could prevent anyone from ever dying of disease! You could eat the same sandwich twenty times!

We never even got to do the last one. It was all locked up before any utopian ideals found their way to the past. After all, we all knew about the butterfly effect. Any good intentions weren’t worth the risks.

They’d created a backdoor, though. In case anything cataclysmic ever happened to the human race, the original scientist who created it knew where the machine was stored. They knew how to unlock it. They knew how to operate it. They knew – at least one would hope – to secure all this highly classified information somewhere other than a sticky note on their monitor, such that any random postdoc in the Physics department couldn’t stumble across it.

One would hope so.

People are imperfect, though. They make mistakes. The person right in front of me had made a terrible mistake hiding everything she felt deep inside her, underneath protective layers of denial and repression.

When I think back on her now, the girl who always wanted to shave but would never let herself, the girl who wanted to ask other girls what it was like but never did, the girl who really truly wanted nothing more than to be pretty and never allowed herself to be, I couldn’t help but think that I knew exactly how to help her.

As much as I wanted to, I knew I couldn’t grab her by the shoulders and scream “YOU’RE A GIRL, YOU DUMBASS.” Not only would she probably be quite frightened by that, I knew the first question she’d ask (the first one I’d ask, if you will):

“How do you know that?”

And that was a question I did not want to give her the answer to. I didn’t want past-Emma locked up in an asylum ranting about how the government was hiding some time travel conspiracy.

Oh, my real name’s Emma, by the way. It felt strange giving a fake name to yourself, but I figure I should let her make her own decision with that.

Telling her the truth wasn’t the only option for helping her avoid those years of pain, though. Maybe I could just...show her a good time. Help her out a bit, you know?

It was probably more than a little selfish to do this instead of electrocuting Thomas Edison or whatever, but I knew, the way you can only know in hindsight, that she was hurting. I couldn't just stand back and not do anything.

I realized then that I had been staring at her without saying anything for over a minute. For all I had changed, that was still something that happened sometimes.

I cleared my throat. Past-me looked even more confused.

"If not it's totally chill."

"N-no!" She almost shouted that. "I mean, um," she was still stumbling over her words, incapable of expressing that she so badly wanted to head upstairs with me, she just couldn't get her thoughts straight. (In more ways than one, I mused.)

"I-I'd love to," she finally decided. I gave her a nice smile, and for the first time in our conversation she gave me one too.

"Awesome. I'm gonna go grab some more punch, but I'll meet you over by the stairs in a second, alright?"

She could only nod. As I headed away from her, the song spoke for both of us.

She said "come over, come over"
She smiled at you, boy

I focused on my breathing so I wouldn't have a panic attack when I saw Aubrey come back from the kitchen. The same song was still playing, oddly enough. It had looped at least twice.

She was still wearing that same grin. It was only then, from a distance where her face wasn't all I could focus on, that I saw her outfit - a flannel shirt tied in the front with a crop-top underneath. It was casual yet it radiated sexuality. I was in awe of it. Again, couldn't this person do a thousand times better than me? Why was I the subject of her attention?

I shook my head. Don't ruin this.

"Didn't mean to keep you waiting." She had to raise her voice to be heard over the party. Maybe she really did just want to go somewhere quieter.

I sheepishly chuckled. "Um, no worries." My gaze shifted up to the bored-looking freshman guarding the stairs. This wasn't a frat party (again, we don't have those), but some organizations still have their own people. "Do you, uh, know the guys here?"

She nodded before extending her hand to me. I went red immediately, but luckily this time around I was able to do what I wanted before my anxiety stopped me. She was so soft.

A familiar nod to the guard was all it took to let us on through, heading up from the second dance floor - again, playing the same song - to the more isolated third

story. Closed doors were all I could see, but she somehow knew where she was going. She opened the last one to a relatively plain bedroom. A large 'spiritual' inflected tapestry was on the wall adjacent the queen bed, but that and a lava lamp were the only signs that someone probably slept here sometimes.

She locked the door behind us.

"Why'd you head to this party, by the way?" she asked casually, the bed creaking as she sat down on it. I remained awkwardly standing.

"Um...my, uh, roommate and his friends wanted to come."

She hummed. "Did you?"

Interesting question. "Not...not really, I guess. Just figured I should meet some new people."

That comment really amused her for some reason. I laughed with her after a second, some of the tension coming off even as the lamp's changing colors bathed us in pinks and oranges.

"Same for me. I don't really get out much."

That shocked me. She crossed her legs.

"You don't have to keep standing, by the way." She chuckled again.

Oh, right. "Um, sorry..." I climbed over to her on the bed, unsure of how to be next to her without being weird. I settled on crossing my legs under myself too. I tried not to stare at her chest.

The song...it was called "Born Slippy", she said...kept pounding away downstairs as she got closer to me. My breath stopped. I'd never wanted anything more in my life.

She could tell, her gaze shifting from my face to my jeans.

*She was a beautiful boy and tears boy
And all in your inner space boy*

"You ever kissed a girl?" she teased, hand snaking over towards me.

My throat tightened. I nodded.

It wasn't much worth reminiscing over. Megan was nice, and pretty, but past-Me had no goddamn clue what to do with her. A kiss after our third date was the whole of it. I was scared of going any further, so I told her I was gay so we could break up without it being either of our faults. She still cried.

I *am* gay, for the record. That didn't make things any easier then.

Had she continued down the normal path, the path I went down, this era of Emma was in for some more heartbreak like that, some more stumbling around in the dark as to what she wanted out of life. Some more living life as a passenger in her own body. That's why I had to do this. That's why I had to sneak the guard and the DJ \$20

each (not much where I come from) to let me on up here and play this song for an hour beforehand.

“Nice.” I leaned closer. “You should be good at it then.”

She wasn’t, and I knew she wasn’t, and she got so flustered after I said that. It was adorable; I couldn’t do anything but lean in and make it official. She only started kissing herself back when I brought my hand to her cock. She was already about to burst through her jeans.

I could tell she wanted to do more, so a murmured “Go ahead,” was all it took for her to start fondling me. It was beyond amateurish, but I wasn’t doing this for my own pleasure. Well, maybe I was a little, so I amped up my moans whenever she did something right, whenever she found my nipple. It was quite Pavlovian – I wanted this new Emma to know how to show other girls a good time.

Still smacking my lips against hers, I unzipped her jeans and took her out of those uncomfortable striped boxers. She moaned into my mouth and I did too.

“Mmm...” A trail of saliva connected us for a moment as I started stroking her. “You’ve got something really pretty here.” That made her melt just like I knew it would. God, boymodders are so easy. One ‘good girl’ and they’re already there. She was lucky that she was me, otherwise I’d make her do more work.

“Are you...” I answered her question early by taking it into my mouth, making her moan even louder.

*I’ve grown so close to you, boy
And you just groan, boy*

I could taste her precum already, my hair brushing against her thighs.

“You’re so...God...” Again, didn’t take much to get her going. I didn’t even have to touch her balls and she was already twitching in my mouth. That meant that I could take my foot off the gas and get my tits out. E had been kind to my girls, they were C cups, but even some 1-month-on-HRT breasts would have been enough for past-Me. Her mouth dropped open, letting some more of those cute groans out.

“You’re so good at this.” She actually made *me* blush at that, smiling over her shaft as I bobbed up and down. “So fucking...mmm...so fucking good...”

I didn’t want her to cum yet. I wanted her to have to hold it back.

I popped off with a perhaps over-enthused gasp, but I knew she wouldn’t notice. Besides, I was having fun, it wasn’t that exaggerated.

“Mmm...you taste great.” She shuddered with pleasure at only those words. I smirked.

“I want to go further...do you?”

I knew the answer, but her enthusiastic nods still helped me at ease. “Yes... yes please.”

I stifled another chuckle. She was so polite. “Great. Before we do, though, I should let you know something...”

Her brows arched. She must have thought ‘here comes the catch I’ve been waiting for.’ I looked down, trying to act embarrassed.

“I’m not sure how to say this, but...I’m trans. I have a penis.”

Her eyes opened wide. I’d had this conversation with some women before, unfortunately, but I could immediately tell her reaction was different. It was shock, but not a shock of disappointment, or sudden revulsion, or lack of attraction.

It was a shock of, Wait,

that’s a thing you can do?

A thing you can be?

*You get wet, boy Get
wet like an angel*

I guess I’d heard of the concept before, but...I’m not sure, it’s different when it’s just a group you’ve heard of, or even someone on TV.

It’s different when you can see them in front of you.

Aubrey, she was a woman. That was just obvious. It felt stupid even thinking any other way about her.

And yet, when she brought down her shorts, she...she looked like me. Down there, at least.

I wasn’t sure how to feel about this. Not about Aubrey, she was still insanely hot and I still wasn’t sure why she was being so nice to me, but about...well...other stuff.

I think she mistook the look I gave for hesitancy, so she started to bring her shorts back up.

“It’s okay, it’s not a big de-“

“No!” Again, I almost shouted it, and I had to lower my voice. “It would be amazing. I don’t know if this is weird to say, but...I’d be honored. Do *you* want to?”

Her eyes lidded, and my heart stopped for a moment...but then she smiled. “Yes. I do. I want you to fuck me.” She grinned properly. “And you’re *going* to fuck me. Right now.”

I had to moan. No one had ever talked to me like that, yet it felt so good. I could only look at her face as she got naked and then stripped me down, caring for me like no one ever had. It was all I had ever wanted. Whatever happened after that night didn’t matter in that moment. Even the perfect feeling of being inside of her, of her ass riding my cock for what felt like hours was second to something else. Something I couldn’t see before.

Something transcendental.

As I left the party, some of past-Me's cum still dripping out of my ass, I sighed. The anxious part of me (unfortunately that never truly goes away) thought about whether the people who locked this technology away were right. What if the new Emma wasn't equipped for the world? What if someone I had only met while I was in pain had somehow saved my life along the way? What if the empty solo cup on the table I knocked over was crucial to the trajectory of the universe? What if past Emma started using Reddit?

I snickered to myself and put all that aside. I could, in that moment, feel a part of myself changing. I wasn't sure how, and I wasn't sure what to extent, but me as I was had already affected something. There was sure to be a new Emma – or perhaps a new Aubrey. A new Natalia. A new Kate. A new girl, a new woman, a new something who had had her life rocked by some mysterious trans girl. Maybe she would rock me in the same way.

I couldn't wait to meet her.

And in walks an angel

Author's note: This story would not be possible without the support of my friends and co-conspirators, as well as the songs "Born Slippy .NУXX" by Underworld, "Cannibal" by Kesha, "Post Ryan" by Gilla Band, and a shitty song about Wendy Carlos by noted hack Momus. Thank you to almost all of them.



“I’m not supposed to want you this much”

by María Baxter

you fell
 with
 lips
 tongue
 teeth
 Until they shut in prayer eyes
 Beneath my body
 You drink my fingers with
 a thirst
 And you let yourself fall so easily
 just out of reach
 all the way down your throat
 wrap
 your
 golden
 teeth
 around
 Arch
 your
 back
 into
 of
 a mutt
 your
 held above
 the rest
 house
 by pruned
 wet fingers
 Goddess
 the
 dressed in holy robes
 sewn from bruising
 lips upon my altar
 a fist full of your hair
 carved holy in your whimpers
 moaning the scent of petrichor

Make me feel it for days after
 Bleeding down my hands
 Dribbling down my pen
 Lap it up
 Mutt

around

me
 an
 altar
 to your
 devotion
 your
 legs
 legs

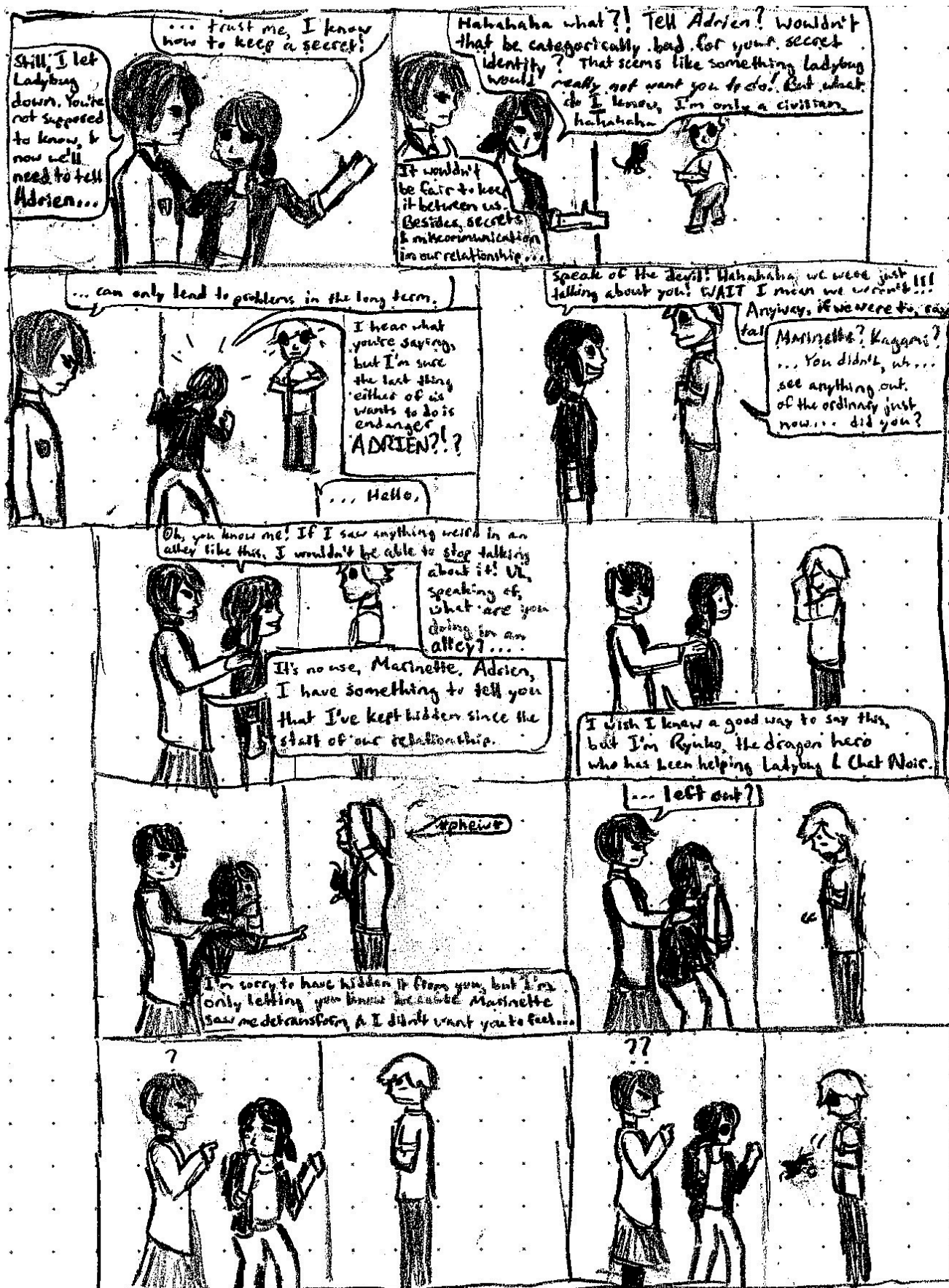
around

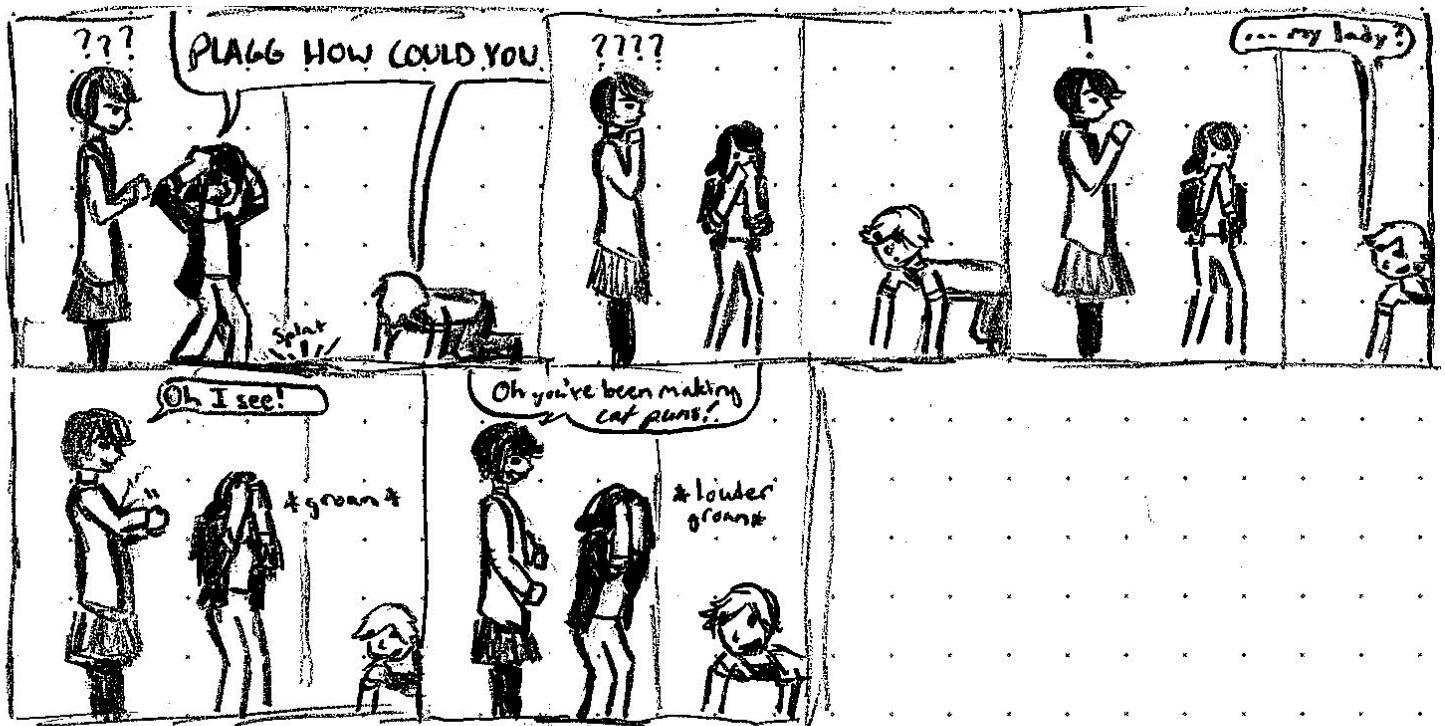
myself

you bend your knees
 in prayer

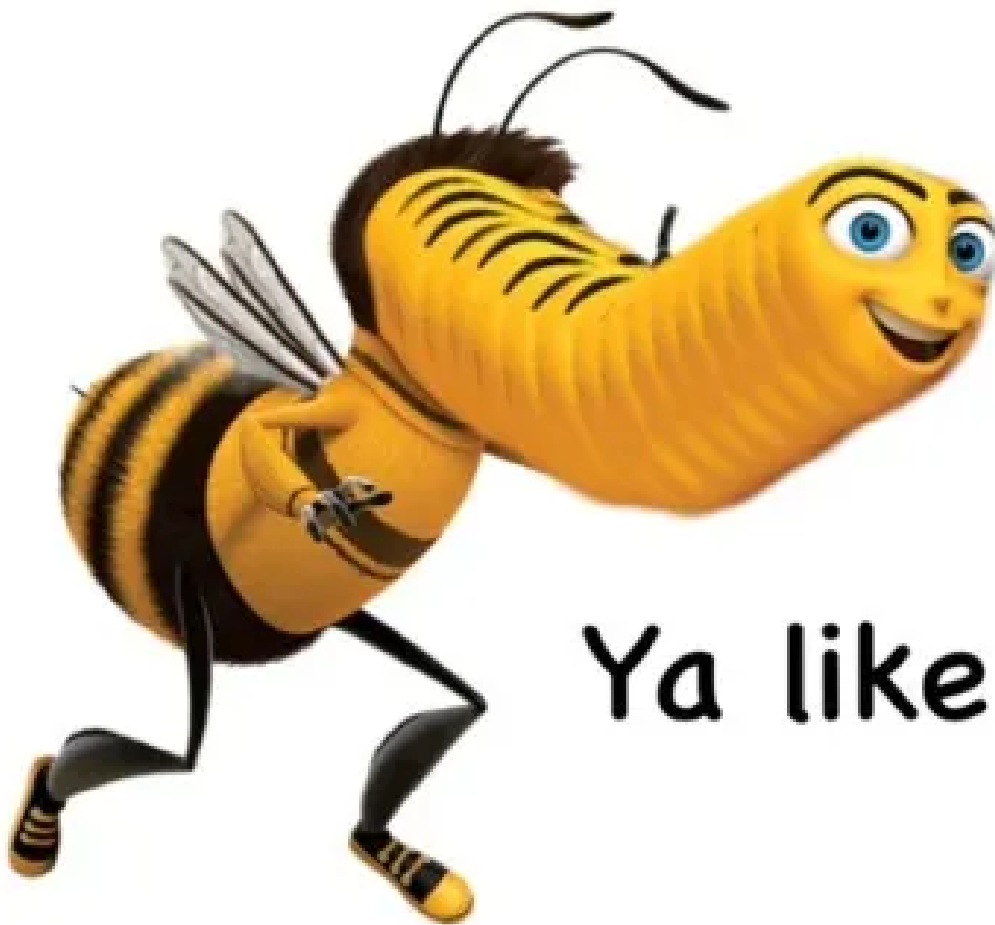
The world looks so much more beautiful from here
 Pushed down against your own sheets
 Pulling up against my thighs





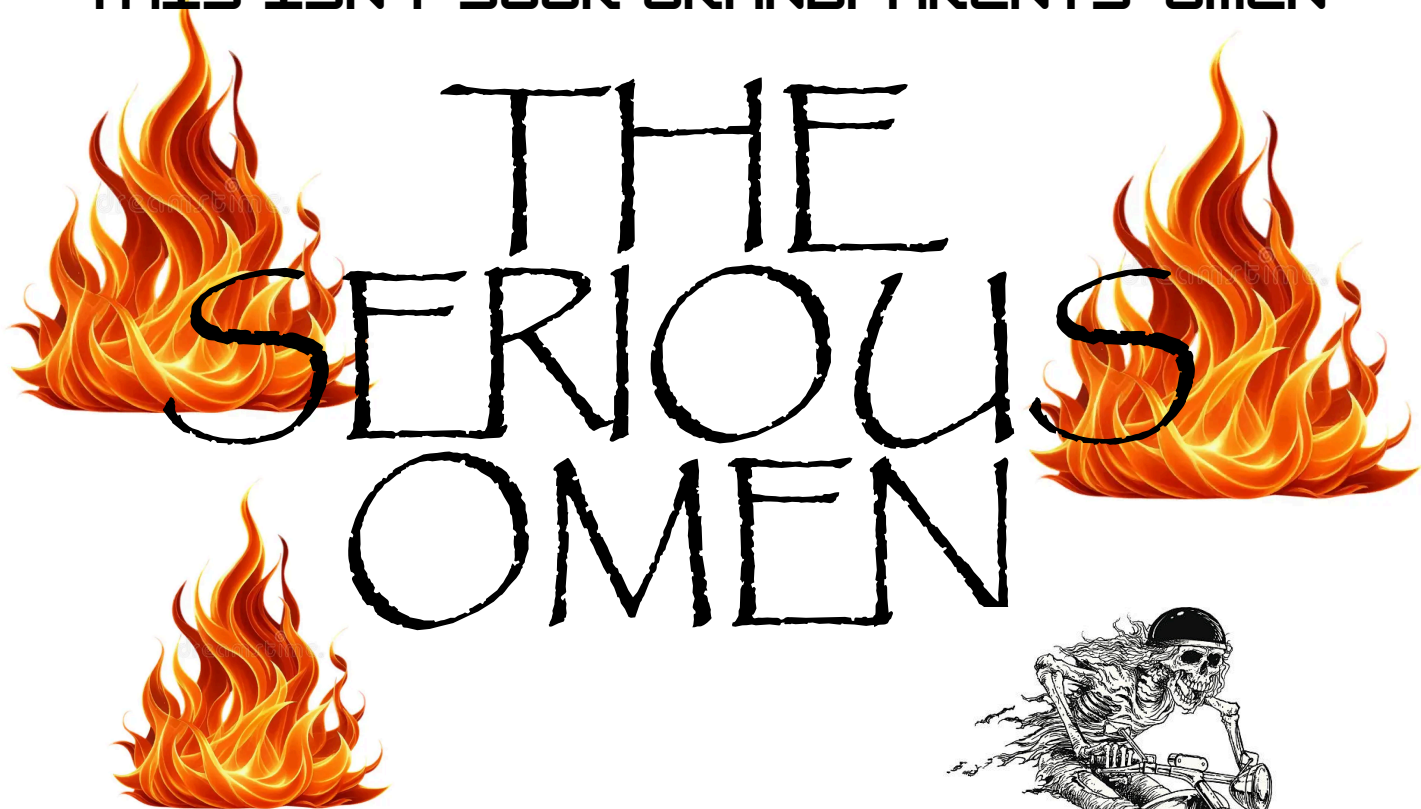


by willow watson



Ya like jazz?

THIS ISN'T YOUR GRANDPARENTS' OMEN



PARENTS BLAST

Woe, the *electric* be upon ye
Turn back now, lest you be

and sexism at Google⁴³. Google, Meta, and Apple have consistently failed to implement successful diversity practices. For years, Google used university rankings to determine the quantity of resources to allocate to forging partnerships with different universities, and this had the effect of causing the company to neglect investment in partnerships with HBCUs. Google also gutted diversity and inclusion programs during the Trump administration to appease far-right employees at the company.

Black people continue to be underrepresented in the workforces of tech giants in general. As of 2022, black employees account for 9.2% of Apple's US workforce⁴⁴ and 5.6% of Meta's workforce⁴⁵. As of 2023, black employees account for 5.6% of Google's workforce⁴⁶. As of this year, black people account for 6.6% of Microsoft's workforce⁴⁷. By contrast, black people account for 12.1% of the US population⁴⁸.

Conclusion

All five of the tech giants are guilty of some or all of the following violations of Hampshire College's investment policy: (1) complicity in genocide, (2) being surveillance companies, (3) engaging in unfair labor practices, (4) practicing oppression or discrimination, and (5) profiting from discrimination. Therefore, Hampshire College ought to divest from all five of the tech giants-- Google, Apple, Meta, Microsoft, and Amazon.

43. <https://www.nbcnews.com/tech/news/tech-news/google-advised-mental-health-care-when-workers-complained-about-racism-n1259728>
44. <https://www.apple.com/diversity/>
45. <https://about.fb.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Meta-Diversity-Data-Summary-Report-2022.pdf>
46. https://static.googleusercontent.com/media/about.google/en/belonging/diversity-annual-report/2023/static/pdfs/google_2023_diversity_annual_report.pdf?cachebust=2943cac
47. <https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/diversity/inside-microsoft/annual-report>
48. <https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2021/08/2020-united-states-population-more-racially-ethnically-diverse-than-2010.html>



PEER SUPPORT RECOVERY CIRCLE

Peer Support Recovery Circle
is a student led support
group offering a non
judgmental, safe space for
students in behavioral
addiction, substance
addiction, and seeking
sobriety —



WEEKLY MEETING
THURSDAY 6:30PM in
APL - GATE 17

Free Cookies and Coffee ☺



advertisements be featured. The result is that well-funded far-right websites figure disproportionately in Google search results and become a source of profit for Google. A 2021 report from the Center for Combating Digital Hate found that between November 2020 and June 2021 the far right news source Gateway Pundit, one of the platforms which pushed election conspiracy theories following Trump's defeat in 2020, earned \$1.1 million in Google ad revenue, while Google itself earned \$496,000 from ads shown on the site³⁶. When bigotry is so prevalent, bigoted content on the internet is inevitable. Search engines profiting from that bigotry, however, is not inevitable and is completely unacceptable, and part of why the business model of Google is fundamentally problematic.

Facebook's advertising algorithms are also racially biased. In 2016, ProPublica published a report revealing that it's possible for advertisers to target Facebook users according to their race and exclude black, Hispanic, or Asian users from viewing ads³⁷. The following year, ProPublica published another report revealing that Facebook allows advertisers to target ads to users who expressed interest in topics such as "Jew hater" or "how to burn Jews" or "History of 'why Jews ruin the world'". Following the release of the report, Facebook amended its algorithm to eliminate these anti-Semitic ad-pool categories³⁸. Facebook also no longer allows advertisers to target users based on their race. But the conditions that enabled these discriminatory ad-pool categories to appear in the first place are still in place. "Jew hater" and the other anti-Semitic categories were generated by a computer algorithm, not a human being³⁹. If human beings were in charge of creating ad-pool categories, then they probably would not have created these anti-Semitic categories. But both then and now, the ads one sees on Facebook are determined almost entirely by algorithms, not humans. This is why even absent the ability of advertisers to explicitly target Facebook users by their race, some advertisements are disproportionately shown to one race over another. Earlier this year, researchers at Princeton and the University of Southern California conducted an experiment in which they purchased an ad for a public university paired with an ad for a for-profit university and found that the for-profit university ads were overwhelmingly shown to black users instead of white users, replicating the racial disparities in for-profit university enrollment⁴⁰.

Not only do Google and Meta profit from discriminatory algorithms, but they also have been accused of discriminatory hiring practices. In 2021, Facebook became the subject of a U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) complaint after a black female applicant for a position at Facebook who had a PhD was told during her interview, "there's no doubt you can do the job, but we're really looking for a culture fit" and "you have a big brain, you wouldn't like this job"⁴¹. This EEOC complaint followed another EEOC complaint in which a black employee complained about having never been evaluated by a black person during his three years at Facebook, that a white coworker had questioned his trustworthiness on account of appearing "slick" (a comment that feeds into stereotypes about black criminality), and that he was reprimanded for making a suggestion to a manager that she include more historically black colleges and universities in her recruitment plan for new interns⁴². Google's black employees also reported discrimination at work. For instance, 10 different black employees at Google who complained to human resources about racism were told to undergo mental health counseling or medical leave. Timnit Gebru, a black female member of Google's ethical AI team known for her pioneering research into algorithmic bias, was fired for criticizing racism

36. <https://counterhate.com/blog/one-of-the-biggest-publishers-of-election-misinfo-earned-up-to-1-1-million-in-google-ad-revenue/>

37. <https://www.propublica.org/article/facebook-lets-advertisers-exclude-users-by-race>

38. <https://www.propublica.org/article/facebook-enabled-advertisers-to-reach-jew-haters>

39. Ibid

40. <https://theintercept.com/2024/06/04/facebook-ads-algorithm-for-profit-colleges/> Facebook does not give advertisers any statistics on the race of the users who see their ads, but the researchers used geography as a proxy for race.

41. <https://theintercept.com/2021/03/11/facebook-hiring-racism-ecoc/>

42. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2020/07/02/facebook-racial-bias-suit/?arc404=true>

Microsoft has a mass surveillance platform for cops called the Domain Awareness System, which was built for the New York Police Department and later sold to the Atlanta Police Department as well as police departments in Brazil and Singapore. The company also provides cloud storage services to local, state, and federal law enforcement organizations through Azure Government. Additionally, the company has created a platform called the Microsoft Advanced Patrol Platform (MAP) which police patrol vehicles use in order to integrate real-time data gathered by surveillance sensors with database records. Following the murder of George Floyd in 2020, hundreds of Microsoft employees called on Satya Nadella, the company's CEO, to cancel all contracts with law enforcement agencies and express support for Black Lives Matter and defunding the police. The company ignored the request. Although the company did stop selling its own facial recognition technology to police departments following the murder of George Floyd, many police departments use Azure to store data collected by facial recognition services developed by other companies, and in this way Microsoft remains complicit in the proliferation of face surveillance. Microsoft also has partnerships with the police in South Africa, a country with a per capita police murder rate three times higher than that of the US. These ties to the cops are in large part made possible by Microsoft's "Public Safety and Justice Department", which is composed of former law enforcement officials³¹³².

Google, meanwhile, profits from racism and sexism through advertising revenue generated from biased search engine results. Safiya Umoja Noble, in her book *Algorithms of Oppression: How Search Engines Reinforce Racism*, gives countless examples of Google search returning extremely racist and sexist search results. Typing "black girls" into Google returned pornographic material as the top hits³³, typing the "N" word into Google resulted in the White House appearing as the first result (this was during the Obama Administration), and all the images returned upon typing "unprofessional hairstyles for work" were of black women wearing popular black hairstyles. Perhaps the most disturbing thing discussed in her book is how Dylann Roof, the perpetrator of a mass shooting at a predominantly-black church in South Carolina that resulted in the deaths of nine black people, became radicalized through Google searches; he typed the words "black on white crime" into Google and the top hit was for the Council of Conservative Citizens (CCC), a white supremacist organization which according to the Southern Poverty Law Center is a modern incarnation of the segregation-era White Citizens Council and regularly publishes articles condemning "race mixing" and lamenting the decline of white civilization³⁴.

Noble's book was published in 2018, so you won't necessarily get the same search results if you type these terms into Google³⁵. But even if specific search terms that once yielded racist and sexist results no longer do, this cannot be taken as a sign that Google's algorithmic bias has been eliminated, for the basic mechanism by which Google ranks its search results and by which these bigoted search results even come to be the top hits is the same as when Noble published her book. At its core, Google Search is still powered by the PageRank algorithm, which ranks the relevance of search results by how frequently they are cited. One effect is that the search results returned by Google for a given query always reflect and reinforce public perceptions of that query, which includes racist and sexist stereotypes about women and people of color. Another effect is that many website owners game the PageRank algorithm in what is known as "search engine optimization" or "Google bombing" in order to have their webpages come up in the first page of search results, or they pay Google to have their

31. <https://gm64cjz7un7ucso4yegkssuqfzmzg7c7m7mkb66c7l6sj7gzyo6sypfid.onion/2020/07/14/microsoft-police-state-mass-surveillance-facial-recognition/>

32. For an overview of the issue of police violence in South Africa, see [https://africasacountry.com/2020/06/the-class-character-](https://africasacountry.com/2020/06/the-class-character-of-police-violence)

33. See chapter 2 of *Algorithms of Oppression* ("Searching for Black Girls")

34. See chapter 3 of *Algorithms of Oppression* ("Searching for People and Communities")

35. It would only take me five minutes to check for myself, but I hate Google so much that I can't stomach the thought of conducting a Google search even for the purpose of researching bias in the search engine.

Apple's products and thereby makes Apple's products inevitably less trustworthy from a privacy and security standpoint. Moreover, Google pays Apple billions of dollars each year to make Google Search the default search engine of Safari where it might otherwise be a more privacy-friendly search engine such as DuckDuckGo or Startpage²². Perhaps these are the reasons why the website tosdr.org, which provides simple and concise explanations of the otherwise incomprehensible privacy policies of hundreds of different companies and rates them based on how much privacy they protect, gives Apple a privacy grade of "D" on a scale from A to E with E being the worst²³. So, even Apple's track record on privacy is unacceptable; if nothing else, Hampshire College should divest from Apple for lying to consumers.

Labor abuses

Apple has a very poor track record when it comes to labor practices. In 2023, Apple successfully lobbied the state government of Karnataka in India for slacker labor laws; a new law was passed increasing the limit on working hours from 9 hours a day to 12 hours a day. This relaxation in labor regulations has drawn massive protests from labor unions in Karnataka²⁴. In 2020, Apple was one of several US companies that tried to weaken the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act, a bill that ultimately was signed into law and requires companies with operations in Xinjiang to prove that their supply chains are not contaminated with Uyghur forced labor²⁵. Additionally, the cobalt used to make the components of Apple's products has been linked to child labor in the Democratic Republic of Congo²⁷. Amazon also has a track record of treating its employees poorly. The company has repeatedly cracked down on employee unionization²⁸, forces workers to work in warehouses whose temperatures exceed 100 degrees Fahrenheit due to lack of air conditioning²⁹, and forces truck drivers to meet delivery quotas so high that drivers are often forced to forgo bathroom breaks and instead urinate in bottles and defecate in bags³⁰.

Clause B of Hampshire College's investment policy states that the college will not invest in companies that "engage in unfair labor practices". Therefore, Apple and Amazon are in contravention of Hampshire College's investment policy on account of their unfair labor practices.

Profiting from bigotry, misinformation, and police violence

Content warning: this section contains disturbing incidents of racist and sexist algorithms and workplace incidents.

Hampshire College's investment policy prohibits investing in companies that "practice oppression or discrimination based on race, gender identity, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, or disability, or promote or profit therefrom." Unfortunately, the tech giants are all guilty of this.

22. <https://www.theverge.com/23802382/search-engine-google-neeva-android>
23. [https://tosdr.org/TOSDR stands for "Terms of Service; Didn't Read"](https://tosdr.org/TOSDR_stands_for_\).
24. <https://thewire.in/government/bjp-government-in-karnataka-changed-labour-laws-after-foreign-firms-lobbying-report>
25. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2020/11/20/apple-uyghur/?arc404=true>
26. The text of the act is available here: <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/PLAW-117/publ78/pdf/PLAW-117publ78.pdf>
27. <https://www.theverge.com/2016/11/18/10786714/apple-samsung-child-labor-cobalt-congo-amnesty>
28. <https://web.archive.org/web/20240217161253/https://www.nytimes.com/2021/03/16/technology/amazon-unions-virginia.html>
29. <https://www.mcall.com/2015/08/17/inside-amazons-warehouse/>
30. <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2021/mar/25/amazon-delivery-workers-bathrooms-memo>

with others. Without collaboration, there can't be production. When you are emphasizing the individual's role as a consumer, you are interested really in focusing on that individual's self-centeredness, his or her sexuality and self-image, a parent's relationship to his or her children, the children's relationship to their parents, a wife's relationship to her husband, each person's relationship to their car, and so on. This whole exercise promotes concentration on self. It's trying to enter into your psyche and thus invade the privacy of the individual, which is a very totalitarian process. That is why I have always argued that the whole democratic process is threatened by the fact that major institutions of society are trying to enter into the private life of people to turn them into consumers. If I am interested in you as a consumer, I am interested in your relationship to your wife, your sexuality, your self-image. These are all internal. When external bodies of power enter into the private lives of individuals, that's where democracy stops and totalitarianism begins."

Hampshire College's investment policy lists "surveillance companies" as an industry not to be invested in. Make no mistake: given that almost all revenue generated by Google and Meta comes from advertising, and given that advertising is fueled by user data, Google and Meta are surveillance companies. Their data mining of users is not a bug; it's a feature. Therefore, Hampshire College's investments in Google and Meta are in contravention of the college's investment policy.

Amazon also has a track record of disregard for privacy. The company has forced its truck drivers to agree to being monitored by AI-powered cameras or else quit working for the company. Additionally, Amazon owns Ring, the company that manufactures doorbell cameras. Ring has been criticized for its ties to local police departments, and has faced several lawsuits over privacy violations as well as a lawsuit from the FTC over failing to prevent Ring employees from being able to access video footage of Ring doorbell users¹⁸. So, Hampshire's investments in Amazon are also in contravention of the college's investment policy.

Apple likes to portray itself as a company that cares about privacy, and often attacks the other tech giants for their disregard for privacy in order to make its own products more appealing to consumers. In some ways, Apple is more benign than the other tech giants when it comes to privacy. Not only does Apple not sell user data¹⁹, but it has rolled out features that provide greater privacy and security to journalists, whistleblowers, and others who need it. For instance, there's Lockdown Mode, which Apple introduced after it was discovered that a spyware tool called Pegasus developed by the Israeli firm NSO exploited vulnerabilities in iPhones to hack the phones of numerous journalists and activists in countries around the world with authoritarian regimes²⁰.

At the same time, Apple's products aren't as nearly private and secure as the company claims they are, which is arguably worse than if Apple didn't care about privacy at all because Apple's "privacy-washing" has the potential to imbue people with a false sense of security that could endanger lives. For instance, Airdrop is commonly used by activists because it is purported to be an anonymous way of sharing files. Unfortunately, Airdrop has security vulnerabilities that compromise its anonymity. Early this year, the Chinese government identified a group of Airdrop users it accused of sharing "inappropriate information" by exploiting a security vulnerability in Airdrop that Apple knew about since 2019 but had failed to address²¹. Furthermore, Apple's hardware and software is all proprietary-- not open-source-- which makes it much harder for outside researchers to conduct security audits of

18. <https://www.ftc.gov/news-events/news/press-releases/2023/05/ftc-says-ring-employs-illegally-surveilled-customers-failed-stop-hackers-taking-control-users>

19. <https://www.apple.com/legal/privacy/enww/>

20. <https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/apple-s-new-lockdown-mode-defends-against-government-spyware/>

21. <https://edition.cnn.com/2024/01/12/tech/china-apple-airdrop-user-encryption-vulnerability-hnk-intl/index.html>

Google's stated purpose for collecting this information is to "provide better services to all our users", which for them means figuring out "what ads you'll find useful, the people who matter most to you online, or which YouTube videos you might like".

Meta, meanwhile, states in its privacy policy¹⁵ that it collects the following information: "content you create, including posts, comments, or audio"; "messages you send and receive, including their content"; "types of content, including ads, you interact with, and how you interact with it"; "hashtags you use"; "the time, frequency, and duration of activity on our Products". Like Google, Meta uses the data it collects to personalize "features, content, and recommendations". Meta also provides "measurement, analytics, and business services" that allow businesses to understand things such as "how many people see and interact with their products, services or content" and "what types of people interact with their content or use their services". Meta states, "lots of people rely on our Products to run or promote their businesses". In other words, Meta helps other businesses become more like Meta, targeting more precisely the people most likely to buy their products.

Stalking is a crime in all 50 states, as it should be. But even a stalker would have a hard time creating as intimate a portrait of your personal life as do Google and Meta through their data collection. Yet lots of people don't mind the fact that Google and Meta collect so much data, believing this sacrifice of privacy as the price one inevitably pays for all the extremely useful services that these companies provide. But make no mistake: there's nothing inevitable about Google and Meta collecting all this data. To give just one example: Proton is a nonprofit that offers end-to-end encrypted email, calendar, and cloud storage for free¹⁶. The which allow access to more cloud storage than is offered for free, as well as a VPN and a password manager¹⁷. In a forthcoming article I will provide a whole table of alternatives to mainstream services offered by tech giants. They do exist; the cliché "if the product is free, you are the product" is simply not true.

The invasion of personal privacy for the purpose of determining "what ads you'll find useful, the people who matter most to you online, or which YouTube videos you might like" is not benign, either. As former Hampshire College professor Egbal Ahmad presciently argued in the late 1990s, before Google and Meta even existed, this invasion of personal privacy is a threat to our democracy. In a 1998 interview with David Barsamian, transcribed in the book *Confronting Empire*, Ahmad stated:

"In the industrial age, the individual became important as a unit of production... throughout the late nineteenth century and all of the first half of the twentieth century, if you look at the research outlay of big corporations, it was mostly spent on how to promote the individual's productivity. Starting with the 1950s onward, there has been a shift. Corporations now spend much less on human beings as units of production and much more on human beings as units of consumption. The major research in most of the corporations is in how to sell, not how to produce."

...

"When you are emphasizing the individual's role as a unit of production, you are interested in his external relationships, his skills, for example. You are interested in his ability to collaborate

15. Meta's privacy policy is available here: <https://www.facebook.com/privacy/policy/>

16. <https://www.proton.me>

17. Until recently, Proton was a for-profit company. But even as a for-profit company it didn't mine user data. That's simply not necessary.

with Israel⁷. Microsoft is also complicit, through its ties to the US Department of Defense and its partnerships with weapons manufacturers such as Raytheon and Lockheed Martin⁸⁹. Meta, meanwhile, is complicit for its excessive censorship of criticism of Israel and pro-Palestinian sentiment on its platform¹⁰. And Apple is complicit due to matching employee donations to Friends of the IDF, which collects donations for soldiers in the Israeli military, as well as organizations such as HaYovel, One Israel Fund, the Jewish National Fund, and Israel Gives which are committed to furthering the expansion of Israeli settlements in the West Bank¹¹.

Many tech giants are also complicit in the genocide of Uyghurs in East Turkestan¹². Microsoft and Amazon provide essential web services to multiple Chinese surveillance companies which provide surveillance infrastructure to the Chinese government that is used to surveil Uyghurs in East Turkestan. Apple and Google purchase some of their electronics components from Chinese companies that have utilized Uyghur slave labor in their factories¹³.

Investing in companies complicit in genocide is not only morally wrong, but also in contravention of Hampshire's investment policy which states that Hampshire College will not invest in "countries with serious human rights violations", which certainly includes China and Israel.

Surveillance

Meta and Google are notorious for their disregard of user privacy. An exhaustive list of the ways in which they scoop up our personal data and have shown disregard for our privacy could fill up an entire book. Here, it will suffice to note that Google generates 85% of its revenue from advertising and Meta generates 97.8% of its revenue from advertising. According to Google's privacy policy¹⁴, which was most recently updated in September 2024, the company collects the following data:

"unique identifiers, browser type and settings, device type and settings, operating system, mobile network information including carrier name and phone number, and application version number. We also collect information about the interaction of your apps, browsers, and devices with our services, including IP address, crash reports, system activity, and the date, time, andreferrer URL of your request."

They also collect information such as "terms you search for, videos you watch, views and interactions with content and ads, voice and audio information, purchase activity, people with whom you communicate or share content, activity on third-party sites and apps that use our services, and Chrome browsing history you've synced with your Google account".

7. <https://medium.com/@artielkoren/googles-complicity-in-israeli-apartheid-how-google-weaponizes-diversity-to-silence-palestinians-cb41b24ac423>

8. <https://blogs.microsoft.com/blog/2022/12/08/microsoft-continues-commitment-to-us-department-of-defense-with-jwc-selection/>

9. <https://news.microsoft.com/2022/11/16/lockheed-martin-microsoft-announce-landmark-agreement-on-classified-cloud-advanced-technologies-for-department-of-defense/>

10. <https://www.hrw.org/report/2023/12/21/metaspromises-systemic-censorship-palestine-content-instagram-and>

11. <https://theintercept.com/2024/06/11/apple-donations-idf-israel-gaza-illegal-settlements/>

12. The Uyghurs are a predominantly ethnic minority in northwest China, numbering approximately 18 million people, who see themselves as victims of centuries of Chinese imperialism and who have in recent years been subject to totalizing surveillance, internment in "re-education camps", crackdowns on religious activities, slavery, and even forced marriages to Han Chinese-- often under the guise of "counterterrorism". For a more comprehensive description and history of the Uyghur genocide, including how the Chinese government has used the US-led War on Terror to legitimize its actions, see *The War on the Uyghurs* by Sean Roberts. For an explanation of how 82 different multinational brands are linked to Uyghur slave labor, see the report "Uyghurs for Sale" published by the Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI) at https://ad-aspi.s3.ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/2022-10/Uyghurs_for_sale-11OCT2022.pdf

VersionId=N2JQOako7S4OTiSb6L7kKE5nY2d_LD25

14. Google's privacy policy is available here: <https://policies.google.com/privacy?hl=en-US>

Why Hampshire College Must Divest from the Tech Giants

By Zain

In this article, I will explain why Hampshire College must divest from the tech giants Google, Apple, Microsoft, Meta, and Amazon (whose names you can remember by the acronym GAMA) by elucidating four main issues that render the companies in contravention of Hampshire College's ethical investment guidelines. These issues are (1) complicity in genocide, (2) privacy violations, (3) labor abuses, (4) profiting from misinformation, bigotry, and policing, and (5) practicing discrimination¹

At the risk of stating the obvious, the tech giants are not the only companies that have these issues. But the tech giants are some of the largest companies in the US-- in fact, some of the largest in the world-- and thus are among the largest contributors to these issues. Amazon, Apple, and Google's parent company Alphabet all rank among the top 10 largest companies in the US by revenue. Microsoft is number 13, and Meta is number 30². When you consider their market capitalization rankings, the dominance of the tech giants becomes even more staggering: Apple, Microsoft, Alphabet (Google's parent company), and Amazon all rank among the five most valuable corporations in the world and Meta is seventh; combined their market capitalization is \$12.4 trillion, which is more than 10% of the market capitalization of all publicly traded companies³. The tech giants are also one of the largest components of Hampshire College's portfolio. As of June 2024, Hampshire has \$237,654 invested in Alphabet; \$768,867 invested in Microsoft; \$448,265 in Amazon; \$285,207 in Apple; and \$67,565 in Meta⁴. Together, these investments comprise 12.7% of Hampshire College's global equity portfolio. For these reasons, I believe that a targeted divestment campaign against these five companies would be more effective than a divestment campaign against any other five companies and more feasible than divesting from all unethical companies. That's why I call on Hampshire College to remove its investments in Google, Apple, Microsoft, Meta, and Amazon, and also cancel any and all contracts with these companies.

Complicity in Genocide

Google and Amazon have a \$1.2-billion contract with the Israeli government called Project Nimbus, as part of which they provide cloud computing technologies to the Israeli government. Although Google claimed that the technology is only for use by Israeli government services, an investigation by WIREDF found that the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) was also using the technologies⁵. *The Intercept* uncovered training materials provided to Nimbus users in the Israeli government which included AI capabilities such as face detection, object tracking, and sentiment analysis⁶. These technologies have the potential to be used to facilitate targeted killings of Palestinians, and thus render Google complicit in the ongoing genocide in Palestine. To add insult to injury, Google has a history of harassing its Palestinian employees and of retaliating against employees who have tried to protest the company's involvement

1. You can find the college's investment policy here: <https://www.hampshire.edu/offices/board-trustees/hampshire-college-laws/hampshire-college-investment-policy>.
2. <https://fortune.com/ranking/fortune500/search/>
3. <https://companiesmarketcap.com/>
4. These statistics come from the June 30, 2024 investment portfolio, which at the time of this writing is the most recent portfolio released. https://intranet.hampshire.edu/system/files/portfolio_holdings_as_of_june_30_2024.pdf
5. <https://www.wired.com/story/amazon-google-project-nimbus-israel-idf/>
6. <https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/22119705-core-infra-nimbus-webinar>

A paradigm shift in thinking is needed to leap beyond limiting beliefs. We learned from 2019 that all those who care about the college need to act as curators, custodians, or parents of Hampshire - that's when we prevented closure, set goals, imagined a new future, and got started.

These stakeholders challenge the institution to see new possibilities that are hard for some to see from within. Their additional energy, support, knowledge, and connections helped the college maximize its potential and prevented Hampshire from closing. Far too often, administrators who are strapped for time and worried about their autonomy ward off outsider ideas, and initiatives that are trying to help. These concerns can be addressed through open dialogue and allowing volunteer projects to be run by other volunteers instead of delaying innovative initiatives until the administration has more capacity.

Hampshire has a unique culture and pedagogy, and the goals to rebuild the college are admirable, but it doesn't appear to run its administration differently from other colleges. What is admissions doing that is really different - and radical? It is currently promoting a radical program in a conventional way. The goal is to make the approach to admissions as radical as the rest of Hampshire, exuding the authenticity needed to change the game.

If you'd like to discuss the game design or other ideas, please visit FrogCollabs.org

Jonathan Podolsky is a Hampshire alum, activist, and a journalist member of the Education Writers Association. More at www.Podolsky.cc



Process of Making the Game

Making and promoting the game could offer students and other community members opportunities to collaborate and solve real-world problems creatively, including how to complete a significant project that is on time, fun, effective, engaging, informative, and inclusive of marginalized groups. It would be an amazing opportunity for students to work across silos in areas such as art, music, voice acting, lighting, and programming while learning about the game design process and higher ed.

I talked to an alum who co-founded a game-making collaborative while at Hampshire called [Glowlime Games](#). He said that to keep students engaged, it's important to get credit for working on the game like an independent study, but it's essential to remember "it's a great resume piece," and for people who want to get into the game industry, "it's a huge leg up." Isaiah Mann 2013F. I spoke with Jennifer Gutterman, Assistant Prof. of Game Design and Game Studies at Hampshire. They suggested that if it's to go viral, it might need to reach a more mainstream audience, so it could be like the [Game of Life](#). However, in this case, players choose between a traditional college and one like Hampshire. "Students at Hampshire could get CEL2 credit or special projects credit or independent study credit, depending on how it works out, and alums would have the benefit of their own professional experience, and students who are enthusiastic."

Conclusion

To move beyond precarity, Hampshire must combine several approaches:

- 1) **Have far higher enrollment goals** - then launch a moonshot that unites the community to break past limiting beliefs of what is possible.
- 2) **Partner with students, staff, faculty, alumni, and other stakeholders** to run various surveys, think tanks, and design contests that help imagine new ways of improving enrollment.
- 3) **Co-create the new reality** with the activated community by welcoming them into groups that help execute these plans and expand the types of admissions ambassadors.
- 4) **Budget conservatively**, decoupling from the aspirational enrollment goal. Set community expectations at the very low end of what is possible because surprise cuts leave students, staff, and faculty scrambling to adjust to the new reality and upset at the perceived lack of transparency.
- 5) **Create and publish contingency plans** for budget shortfalls and prioritized expenditures when fundraising and enrollment improve.

Scope

Limits on the project's time, cost, and scope must be established, focusing on its purpose and target audience. Possibilities include leveraging the existing artwork and storyline of the Taking Root comic book or the Quads and Mods Board game, as well as updating to reflect changes at Hampshire. One industry expert I spoke with suggested making a game within a game (called a mod) within Roblox, Minecraft, or Fortnite. There are pros and cons to this approach because a game mod could be more within scope but only accessible to those who want to purchase the overall game. A standalone game could be accessible from any desktop or mobile browser.

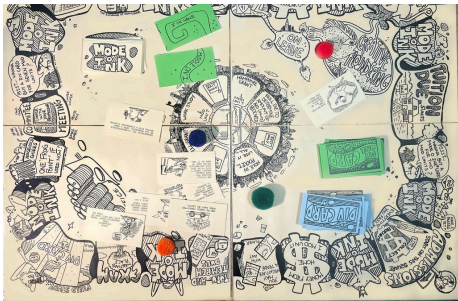
This project could greatly increase engagement on campus and with a wider group of stakeholders. As a bonus, it might help with enrollment. Students might work for academic credit, build up their portfolio, and perhaps even be provided campus living space over the summer, while alums and others could volunteer their time. If funding is needed to market the game, grants and donations from non-alum sources could be pursued.

Audience/Gen Z

The video game is aimed at a wider audience than just video game players, and it is not intended to promote just the game design program. It is about promoting a weird college in a weird way and opening up new marketing channels to reach new students. For the foreseeable future, Gen Z will remain the primary target market for prospective Hampshire students. Video games are the [second-largest](#) proportion of their media consumption time, second only to social media (while Hampshire is reaching out on social media, those platforms are saturated with college advertising). Gen Z likes creative and interactive and a study from Deloitte suggests that [87% play video games weekly](#).

Some Relevant Video Game Categories

Several games include colleges. [Sims 4: Discovery University](#) is about life at college. [Campus Life](#) is a video game based on the student experience and is set to come out in 2025. Visual novels are another category of games. [Professor Layton](#) (inspired partly by Indiana Jones, another archaeologist/professor character) is one of the most successful video games in the visual novel category. Another category is advergames, which show that a video game can be used to promote a business.



Mark Tuchman 81F and Barbara Gail 81F and was revised several times. As part of Tuchman's Div. III, he made a board game called Quads and Mods. I interviewed him via Zoom, where he told me, "The goal of the book was to make a guide for new students, and my secret goal was to instill in people an understanding of how unique this whole institution was, especially at the time that it started, and also the idea that it should keep reinventing itself... One section called 'The Woods of Inquiry' depicts amphibious narrator Lilly Padd hiking off-trail in the woods as a metaphor for independent learning."

Video Games and Film

[Sean Song](#) collaboratively designed an RPG video game as their Div III at Hampshire, picking up skills such as coding, writing, and arts. Another example is the video game [Word Snack](#), which was made by Hampshire students, faculty, and staff in three months. A class of 19 students made [Pirate Squabbles](#) in four months. There was even a simple video game set at Hampshire College called [Winter Break](#). The game was made in 2016 by a Hampshire-student-run [video game collaborative](#). The story and script of the feature-length film [Snowflakes](#) was made collaboratively with its cast. Made for a Div. III, it was a fictional movie that was set at Hampshire and portrays students.

Idea for a New Collaboration

While there are video games that are set in college in general, video games used to promote businesses, and colleges that have virtual tours, I found no other college that has created a video game about the experience of attending the college over time; Hampshire would be an ideal college to do this and showcase its uniqueness to prospective students. Many examples of alternative media use and collaborations have benefitted Hampshire throughout its history. Note that Hampshire's game design program was ranked [#6 in the nation](#) in 2017 and [Best in Northeast](#) in 2021. I discussed this idea with a variety of game developers and industry experts, as well as four game design professors, including Pat King, now Director of Production at Penn Game Studios.

Hampshire's rich history of collaboration can spark various ideas for bold ideas for attracting new students. This section highlights some examples of past projects followed by an idea for a new video game project to reach prospective students in a fresh way.

Invitation with a Record Album In 1970, Hampshire sent a record album to prospective students. In 1985, Hampshire sent a [record album](#) inviting alumni to attend Hampshire's Fifteenth Anniversary. For a subsequent anniversary, a cassette was sent. This alternative media use reminded people of the creativity and uniqueness of Hampshire.

Hampshire College Library Aorta Project This collaboration is described in [Working Together at the Heart of the College](#). Library Director Rachel Beckwith, former Art Gallery Director Lorenzo Conte, Prof. Thom Long, and students collaborated to create an extruded wood lettering installation with a quote from *The Making of a College*. This staff/student/faculty collaboration shows heart and marketing savvy.

Hampshire Gamification The Kern Center, which helps showcase Hampshire to prospective students, has [ten games](#) built into the building ([hints here](#)). These were designed in collaboration with the [founder of the game design program](#) and have been featured in the [New York Times](#).



The 2019 Hampshire Crisis Staff, faculty, students, parents, and others raised money, planned an alternative course for the college, and pressured the board. The movement creatively utilized social media, earned media, opinion articles, fundraising, Slack, Discord, and more. A Re-envisioning Committee also proposed ideas, such as Learning Collaboratives. (Photo via Hamp Rise Up Facebook page).

Taking Root and Quads & Mods For years, new students (and some prospective students) received [Taking Root](#) in the mail, a guide to navigating one's time at Hampshire. It also generated some buzz outside of the college. It was designed by

Content Strategy CTCL needs to find its own voice or will become less relevant as it gets further away from the book that spawned it. The organization should add a content director to create or curate articles, video reports, podcasts, and round table discussions exploring issues in student-centered education or highlighting unique programs at the member colleges.

Posting engaging content frequently to the website and social media will help drive more traffic to the site and the fairs. It takes time to build an audience by building up content, so it's important to start soon and ramp up. The content offers a two-for; it can also be broadcast on the marketing channels of the individual colleges as they are covered.

Audrey Bilger, President of Reed College (a CTCL member college), wrote about Higher Ed's PR problem in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* and suggested a PR campaign. "What we see too infrequently in the media are stories of satisfied alumni who believe that getting a college education changed their lives."

Funding

Fees from the participating colleges would cover funding for more fairs. Philanthropists, corporate sponsors, educational foundations, and other non-profits interested in alternative colleges could pay for new endeavors.

III: Game On Collaboration and innovative media use are part of Hampshire's DNA, and its website states, "[Collaboration is at the core of who we are.](#)" *The Making of a College* was written about the college's founding, a huge collaboration that included the new college committee formed by four schools and the [Hampshire College Conference](#). The book [increased professors' willingness to come to work at a brand-new college](#).

The founders were keenly aware of the need to consider being on the cutting edge of technology applications. "The College intends not only to use new technologies where it is sensible and economically possible to do so, but to introduce its students to their meaning and use as a part of liberal education in the present age." *The Making of a College*, page 108.

II. Consortia that Change Lives

Martin Van Der Werf is a former editor at the *Chronicle of Higher Education* and Policy Director at Georgetown University's Center on Education and the Workforce. In his article, "[Why is College Student Recruitment So Uncoordinated?](#)", he discusses the deluge of marketing materials received by people looking into colleges. His next article proposes various groupings of colleges that could form a [consortium](#) to reach students focusing on a particular school category.

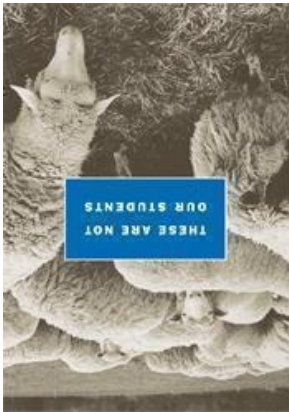
Loren Pope wrote *Colleges That Change Lives* (CTCL) in 1996, which included high praise for Hampshire. The colleges listed in the book began having college fairs with his blessing and later formed the CTCL organization. It is one of the consortia mentioned in Van Der Werf's article. I went to their fair in Chicago this past August and talked to representatives of numerous colleges. The counselors were passionate and knowledgeable, but most colleges needed to show how they differed from each other more strongly.

The book was last updated in 2012, and a fresh version would be helpful, but they are unlikely to update it again. Below are other ideas for how the organization could better evolve to serve its participating colleges. Hampshire can encourage this direction; alternatively, it can join or create different consortia or band together with a subgroup of CTCL colleges for new outreach efforts.

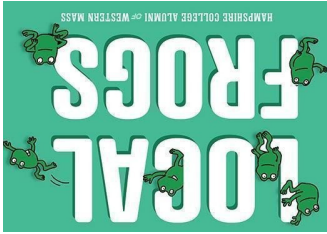
More Fairs The organization could explore ways to add more fairs to reach prospective students. They would need to consult to see what's feasible for most of the colleges. Recently, alumni were invited to accompany staff at Hampshire's table, and I think current Hampshire students should also be invited.

CTCL Website Directory Hampshire should look at this [webpage](#) of a college in Florida, which is dedicated to their CTCL content. Hampshire could do something similar on its own website and on [Hampshire's page in the CTCL directory](#). The overview page there has just one paragraph and needs more essential points about why Hampshire's differences are beneficial. The [video](#) is eight years old, and most of the professors in the video are no longer at Hampshire; it pre-dates the Learning Collaboratives and should be replaced with [This is Hampshire](#), a video that is just one year old.

Here are a couple of graphics that I think work well within the Hampshire context: The poster on the left states, "These are not our students" and has sheep in the background. It's a classic developed for Hampshire in the 1990s by the North Charles Street Design Organization in coordination with Hampshire Admissions and Communications. It communicates that Hampshire is unique in a credible way because a regular college wouldn't make a poster like that. Page 4-5 of Hampshire Admission's current [viewbook](#) seems to be based on this poster but lacks the simplicity and effective boldness.



I came up with the name Local Frogs for Hampshire College Alumni of Western MA, which also fits with the requirement to be short, simple, and bold (in a playful way). The logo was designed by Mark Tuchman. LocalFrogs.org is a snapshot of the 2019 concept.



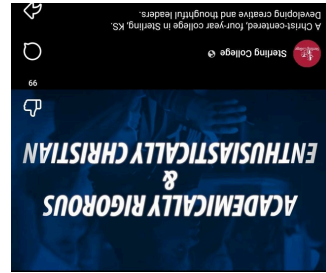
Design Contest

Using a brief brainstorming process, I came up with possible taglines such as "Intellectual Alchemy" or simply the word "cookie-cutter" crossed out. A community-wide process could yield more possibilities. A well-crafted design contest would have multiple benefits: engaging the community, creating excitement, and a bit of positive word of mouth. The process could be run by alumni experienced in marketing, and they could also run focus groups. Separate contestant groups could include students, alumni, etc. The administration would still have the final say, and the ads would be subject to further review based on ad performance tracking.

Utilize Alumni Social Media Experts

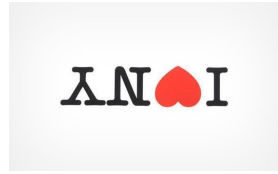
One option would be to create an advisory council with subcommittees for different platforms. Dmitry Pepper '16F created the Humans of Hampshire College online project as a student and, since graduating, has become [active on TikTok](#) with over 19 million viewers. Alumni experts could also write and curate expert articles on topics of interest to parents of prospective students that could be posted on LinkedIn.

In a sea of bland or similar ads, the boldness of the ad on the left, which says “Academically Rigorous & Enthusiastically Christian,” stands out and quickly sorts out who would or would not be interested, saving time for prospective students and admissions staff. Clarity also helps reduce attrition since people know what they are getting into earlier.



C. Short | Simple | Bold Here are three iconic and incredibly impactful campaigns that have attributes that Hampshire can learn from, including conveying simple concepts and emotions in very powerful ways:

The **I♥NY** campaign is concise - just four symbols, yet its message and instant connection to New York City is unmistakable. It's a logo, slogan, and trademark recognized worldwide and part of a marketing campaign that led to a [tripling of tourism revenue](#) when the city was in dire straits. It was all the more original as it was designed long before the ubiquitous use of emojis and abbreviations in texting.



Apple's **Think Different** ad series contrasted with its competitors by highlighting creativity and innovation instead of product



Think different™ specifications. It helped save Apple, which was seen as a sinking ship in 1997. According to Forbes, “By featuring images of famous innovators and thinkers, the campaign appealed to consumers' aspirations and values. It positioned Apple as a company that shared their desire to change the world and make a difference.” The commercial is worth a watch; it's just over a minute long and viewable on Youtube.



While not promoting a specific college, “**A mind is a terrible thing to waste**” is perhaps the most effective higher ed campaign ever. It raised over \$2.2 billion to help more than 350,000 minority students attend college. Most Americans in the latter part of the 20th century would have instantly known that slogan, the ad campaign it was from, the organization it was for, and the fund's purpose.

Hampshire's ad on the left says, "We're different from every other college," but that fails to differentiate when other colleges deliver the same message. The ad also says, "Let us show you why," but it would be more effective if it showed what's different. The ad on the right describes St. John's College as *A College Like No Other*. A book about St. Edmund College uses the same line. *Augusta University* and *Mt. Holyoke* tell of an experience like no other. Hampshire can't just say it is different; it must boldly demonstrate.

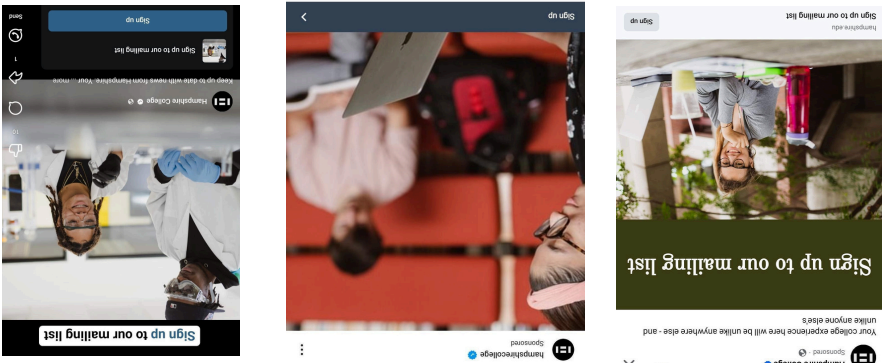
Hampshire's Printed Materials

One of Hampshire's brochures says, "Be the Entrepreneur of Your Own Education." The intention here is to convey that one's educational path at Hampshire is self-directed and allows independence. However, that can be conveyed without using the word entrepreneur, which has a negative connotation for some. For others I have spoken with, the wording lacked impact.

Show, Don't Tell

Hampshire's ads tout the idea of becoming an "agent of change" or "agent of momentous change." It is similar to the term "change agent," which sounds very corporate. It also doesn't convey how the Hampshire community can nurture individuals into a broader alliance versus pursuing change on their own terms - something a change-minded person could pursue independently without needing Hampshire's context or support. While the aim is to sound bold, it sounds too good to be true because momentous change is difficult and can't be guaranteed.

Funnel



I understand the strategy of trying to move prospective students from casually interested, to engaged, to campus visitor, then to applicant. Still, Hampshire keeps showing a similar ad dozens of times with the same text asking the viewer to sign up for the mailing list. Alternating 10-20 different phrases would be more effective so that the viewer learns another reason to get interested with each ad.

What Can Be Done Differently

Below are three potential ways Hampshire can more effectively reach prospective students: improving printed and online media, expanding a marketing collaborative, and creating a game within a game (a video game mod). However, the specific ideas are much less important than the mindset shift that would enable a more radical approach. Hampshire can break through the increasingly homogenized liberal arts marketing noise with a differentiating boldness. In the article's concluding section, I propose a moonshot, whole-of-community approach that can radically upend the current paradigm to free Hampshire from its survive-not-thrive trajectory.

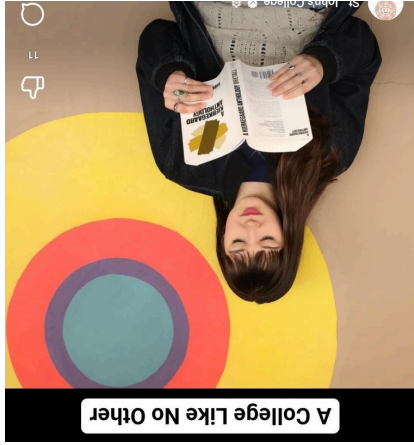
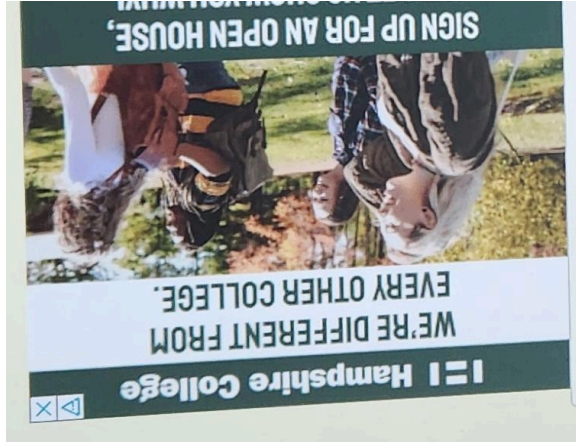
Interview Request

I contacted Dean of Admissions and Financial Aid, Fumio Sugihara, requesting an interview. He directed me to the college spokesperson, Jennifer Chrisher. She was [promoted to vice president](#) in July and is [in charge of](#) financial aid, enrollment, events, fundraising, alumni engagement, marketing, public relations, and career development. She didn't respond to my request, but I was able to ask Sugihara one question during a committee meeting of Hampshire Open Network: If the Colleges That Change Lives (CTCL) fair had more events, would Hampshire participate? He said they would. In these meetings, he has been open and transparent about some of the challenges facing Hampshire and made notable efforts to improve enrollment but in the big picture, major challenges remain.

I. How to Differentiate

Working with students to discover how they first heard about Hampshire and what approaches they think will work is essential. For my part, I'll show what I think is not working that well and provide some ideas for improvement, including short, simple, bold, or even polarizing text. "The reason for this focus on differentiation is simple: When brands are strong and distinct, institutions survive and thrive. If the institution thrives, it can have a bigger impact on students like me." -Suzan Brinker, *Pass/Fail: The Urgent Need for Strategic Leadership in Higher Education*.

A. The Problem



To Succeed, Hampshire Must Get a Lot Weirder by Jonathan Podolsky

Is Hampshire College in perpetual crisis or merely navigating a turbulent chapter? Students have witnessed firsthand the impact of [painful cuts](#): 9% of non-academic staff laid off, a staggering 25% reduction in library personnel, retirement contributions suspended, and work-study hours slashed. This article dives deep into these pressing issues, offering a thoughtful critique and innovative solutions to help Hampshire move beyond its current precarity and austerity. I also include a number of ideas for how current students could be involved in those solutions. Drawing from my experiences as an alum, activist, and journalist, along with on-the-ground and online research, I aim to shed light on Hampshire's challenges within the historical and broader higher education context.

The Shortfall

Hampshire's finances are under strain partly because of an enrollment shortfall and fundraising nearly [one-quarter below](#) the original campaign goal. President Wingenbach wrote to alums on June 21, 2024, informing them that there will be around 1000 students for the coming years instead of the 1100-1200 forecasted initially. When Jonathan Lash (the last president with a multi-year term before Wingenbach) came to Hampshire, there were 1500 students. The Mimi Nelson administration came in after that and almost closed or merged the college; Hampshire still exists because the movement to save Hampshire in 2019 refused to accept the assessment that Hampshire couldn't escape national trends. It is a more competitive market now as I've mentioned in [Amherst Indy](#), but assumptions need to be questioned. Why settle for the enrollment ceiling during Wingenbach's administration being lower than the floor of the Lash administration?

It's Happened Before

Enrollment has been increasing at Hampshire despite the pandemic and the challenges of rebuilding the admissions department since its [decimation in 2019](#). Everyone I have met in the department seems diligent and cares deeply about the college. The following critique is not a reflection on them as individuals but an opportunity to have a fresh look at enrollment challenges that affect everyone at the college. Enrollment has often come in under projections, and caused crises, such as in 2016, 2018, 2019 (when the college didn't accept a full class), and 2024. How can this unfortunate cycle be broken, especially now that we are reaching the [demographic cliff](#)?

Front Cover: Finch Arnold

Mia: What's a rodeo?
Violet: We need to repopulate the hive
Finch: this is worse than sex

Willow: crabs

• მოც

Staff Box: (in order of appearance)
J. E. Cramer: I would like to pay a third party to change the oil in my car, for I cannot do it on my own and lack the initiative to learn

Marlon Brando Says “Penis” II - 4-6
 Virtues of Edging - 6-12
 Bible Translation - 13-14
 WEd Fanfic - 15
 House of Mirrors - 16-18
 A Breath Sent Out to Sea - 18-20
 Born Slippery - 21-29
 “I’m not supposed to...” - 30-31
 Miraculous Comic - 32-33

Peer Support - 22

Hampshire Must Diver - 14-22

Hampshire Must Get Weirder - 3-14

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POLICY

The Omen is an every-other-weekly publication that is the world's only example of the consistent application of a straightforward policy: we publish (almost) all signed submissions from members of the Hampshire community that break neither the law nor the some ethics now. Send your impassioned yet poorly-thought-out rants, self-insert fanfiction, MS Paint comics, and whiny emo poetry to omen@hampshire.edu; we'll publish it all, and we're happy to do it. The Omen is about giving you a voice, no matter how little you deserve it. Since its founding in December of 1992 by Stephanie Cole, the Omen has hardly ever missed an issue, making it Hampshire's longest-running publication.

Your Omen submission (you're submitting right now, right?) might not be edited, and we can't promise any spellchecking either, so any horrendous mistakes are your fault, not ours. We do promise not to insert comical spelling mistakes in submissions to make you look foolish.

Your submission must include the name you use around campus: an open forum comes with a responsibility to take ownership of your views. Views expressed in the Omen do not necessarily reflect the views of the Omen editor, the Omen staff, or anyone, anywhere, living or dead.

The Omen staff consists of whoever shows up for Omen layout, which take place every other Friday at 7:00 p.m. in room 202 of the Kern. You should come and answer the staff box question. We don't bite. You can find the Omen every other Monday in the DC, the post office, online somewhere, and just about any other place we can find to put it.



Views in the Omen (5)

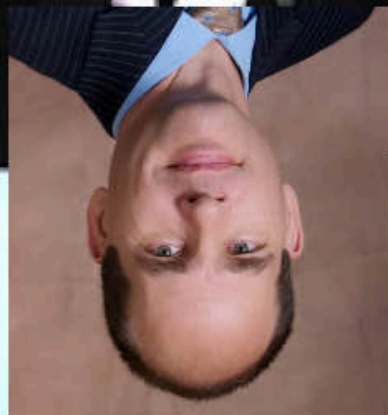
Do not necessarily (7)

Reflect the staff's views (5)

The Omen

62.1

MY
BIG
FAT
GREEK
WEDDING



Love
is here
to stay...
so is
her family.

